



Refugee  
Therapy  
Centre



# ANNUAL REPORT

2011 - 2012



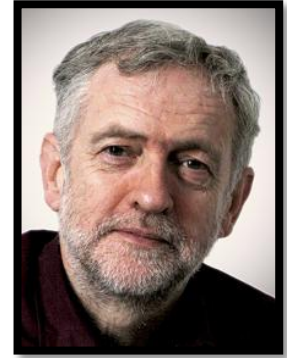
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Registered Charity: 10825922

Company Number: 3895072



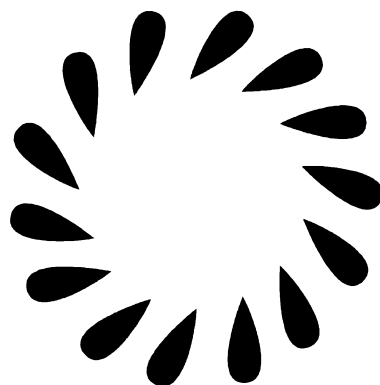
## Message from Jeremy Corbyn MP

In tough times for all it is reassuring to know that the Refugee Therapy Centre continues to provide a sanctuary for some of the most vulnerable. Sadly funding cuts have impacted on the Centre itself at a time when its services are needed more than ever.

I am proud that in Islington local people pull together and look out for one another. But there remains a desperate need for therapeutic services for those fleeing violence, awaiting a Home Office decision, or struggling to rebuild broken lives.

Long may Aida and her team continue to work with our local refugee and asylum seeking communities, offering therapeutic support, recognising their cultural and linguistic needs, and highlighting their experiences as well as the positive contribution they make in the UK.

I am honoured to be a patron and wish all at the Centre all the best for the coming year.



## Report from the Chair

### John Denford



This has been my fourth year as Chair and I am pleased to report that, although it has been challenging from a financial standpoint, it has been another very productive and successful year for the Refugee Therapy Centre from clinical work and provision of service in general. We have now well settled into the new premises and have been able to consolidate many of our activities with the hope that our society reaches a fair and just attitude toward asylum seekers and refugees, but we are a long way off from that. We hoped that we should plant roots in our new building a safe, respectful environment as we move forward, and I am pleased to report, we manage this well. In the face of all economic and political challenges, I am proud to report that the Centre able to continue to work towards its objective, providing intercultural therapeutic support for refugees and asylum seekers.

When I walk into the Centre, I have a strong sense of an organisation seeking to help its clients achieve liberation. Whether in the clinical work, the mentoring or the training, there is an important common strand – a desire to share knowledge and to help people achieve what they can for themselves. This is an excellent example of good leadership by Aida who know how to help people achieve genuine empowerment – the sort that comes from within.

For this reason, the intercultural aspect of the Centre as a core value is vitally important. Aida and her team with their commitment ensure all the work is based on a strong human rights framework. The Centre's work reflects our commitment to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. This helps us all to learn from each other and from our client and teaches us about the frailty and strength of humanity.

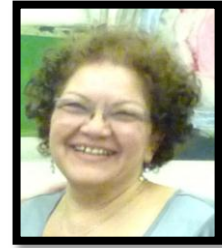
The Board of Trustees and Management Committee as matter of routine spent some time to reflect on our strategic priorities so that we can continue to provide services to people who come to us because of the existing gap in the provision in services within NHS, and we are hoping to develop and remain sustainable. Aida and her team are working hard to follow the tasks Trustees set at the Strategic Planning meeting. I am proud to report that in the Board of Trustees and Management Committee, we have an excellent mix of talents; working together to provide the support, good governance and strategic leadership that is needed for the Centre. I should like to express my immense gratitude to all the members of the Trustees and Management Committee, Aida Alayarian, Josephine Klein, Micol Ascoli and Ian Hanham and Lennox Thomas.

As the Trustees and Management Committee, we are well-aware of Aida's tremendous personal contributions to the success of the Centre in all areas. Given a complex problem of staff shortages and financial limitation, Aida has a rare and enviable ability to find simple resolutions to any matters arising, enabling her to keep focus on the primary task of providing high quality psychological support to our clientele. It is delightful to see how her eyes light up when she is reporting on Centre activities or working on new ideas to advance the services we are offering. On behalf of the Board of Trustees and the Management Committee, I would like to thank Aida and her team for their continued enthusiasm and hopefulness within their work, the benefits of which are felt in the community year after year. Aida and her team at the RTC offer a great contribution to the field of trauma work, and I look forward with anticipation to how their continuous innovative thinking and dedication will inspire us for years to come.

I look forward to another successful and productive year where we continue to offer our clients the space and freedom to explore the meaning of some of their experiences in safety and with respect. With the dedication and expertise of all those who work and volunteer at the Centre, we will continue to

move forward with strength of purpose and humility in action, enabling the high quality of our services to be maintained while reaching greater numbers of those in need.

## Report from the Chief Executive & Clinical Director — Aida Alayarian



During the last year, the Centre provides quality services that reflect the needs of the community we serve and our objectives continued to be to supporting refugees and asylum seekers, attend to their needs and paying regards to the Charity Commission's guidance on public benefit when we are planning our activities for the year. Our priority continues to be children, young people and families, and those that have been in the UK less than ten years.

During the year, we had the capacity to offer services in 17 languages, including: Albanian, Amharic, Arabic, Dari, English, Farsi, French, German, Italian, Lingala, Luganda, Serbo-Croat, Somali, Swahili, Tigre, Tigrinya and Turkish. Group work with both women and men in different languages has continued, helping our clients work through issues of cultural alienation, social isolation, anxiety and depression and thus forming an important part of the work of the Centre.

The regular feedback received from our clients, indeed the progress report from therapists, continues to be invaluable in monitoring, measuring and evaluating the outcome of our services that informs us of the positive benefit our work has in the community. In addition to clients' feedback, the outreach work in the community and events at the Centre during the year ensures that we can identify the needs of those we seek to serve.

### **Support, Outreach Community Development Workers (CDW):**

I am proud to say that our SOCDW has now been running for ten years and continues to be one of our most innovative services. We have an experienced and dedicated team who provide access to other provision at RTC and local services. For many of our clients accessing local services can be difficult but as a result of our CDW project, many clients have gone on to utilise services from other statutory and voluntary organisations. The CDW team helps to breakdown prejudices about mental health problem within community which improves integration and reduces isolation amongst people in need of psychological support; helping them and their families. The work of the CDW's has further developed the Centre's connections with communities at large, with 540 clients referred and supported by the CDW team. Between them, the team offered Bi-lingual Support Work in twelve languages: Albanian, Arabic, Amharic, English, Farsi, Dari, French, Italian, Lingala, Somali, Tigrinya and Turkish. Clients were provided with emotional support and encouragement in looking for employment, voluntary or paid. In addition, through weekly drop in sessions facilitated by the Community Development Workers, clients have been signposted to relevant services within the community and offered other forms of practical support. These are held on Thursday and Friday mornings. Clients were sign-posted to services including GP surgeries, housing advice agencies, Job Centres, ESOL classes, Colleges, Refugee Community Organisations, IAPT Services, Job Centre's, Community Low Centre, Citizens Advice Bureaus and other Community Organisations.

The main aims of the CDW's are to:

- Engage with communities to plan and develop services and help refugee families and individuals understand mental health.
- Reduce stigma and work towards greater understanding of mental illness to improve awareness within Refugee Communities.
- Gather and provide better information about people who use mental health services. This includes working to improve monitoring of ethnicity, better dissemination of information and of good practice, and improved knowledge about effective services.
- Be responsive to, and work closely with other services.
- Address inequality by improving access to information and aiding rehabilitation.

Recognising the gap between clinical evidence and clients' feedback helped us to provide a service that bridges clinical and practical care, which is still a much needed service for the Centre. Over 42% of our referrals this year came through the Support Outreach Community Development project which is a demonstration of how successful the project has been at engaging with communities. We are particularly proud of our engagement with the Somali community this year who have traditionally been one of the hardest communities to engage in psychological services. The CDW team has continued to provide the twice-weekly drop-in sessions, which helps people who are unsure of the type of service they may need, talk to a member of the team. This year we have also continued with our outreach; by attending local events and meetings; and the team has started a number of new groups for women who remain isolated in our communities. A key achievement this year has been the involvement of the team in the European programme Grundvitg. Wi-Can is a project dedicated to women refugees and asylum seekers. The project is sharing best practice across six member states including the UK, drawn from a series of practical workshops that are designed to improve women's access to a range of services. Our Cookery and Story Telling Women's Group are examples of this.

Work with families and children have always been a major part of the Support Outreach Community Development project. Our work with families this year been a positive area for the team, and again we can point to our work with the Somali community as an area of particular success. RTC receives referrals for children and young people from schools, colleges, refugee community organisations, social services and health professionals, however recently we have received most of our referrals from the community directly. We have also noted a trend whereby parents themselves are asking for our help. This represents an increasing trust between ourselves and the community - one we hope will continue to grow.

### **Mentoring Project:**

The Mentoring project remains one of the Centre's great successes, having developed out of feedback and suggestions from our clients into an essential and extremely popular support service for refugees and asylum seekers of all ages, with priority for children and young people. Mentors provide weekly therapeutic language and educational support sessions, to ease the process of adaptation and integration into a new social and cultural environment and to help young people with their education. The project has continued to grow and remains a very significant part of the Centre's work. Originally established in 2003 as a two year project, the popularity and demand for this service has seen it become one of our most successful projects. The project aims to empower refugees, asylum seekers and their families by

- Increasing self-esteem and confidence
- Improved concentration in school work
- Improved English language skills
- Improved educational and work achievements
- Making new friends and integrating into school and society



- A reduction in feeling of anxiety and loneliness
- An increase in positive hopes and aspirations for the future

Volunteers are recruited through the UCL volunteering fair in early October and by advertising the project with the UCL RUMs bulletin. After a large number of applicants this year, we were able to short list 23, and after a careful interview process, 8 were selected. Three mentors from the previous year, Hannah Costelloe, Julia Darko and Laura Gill, also wished to continue. So, the mentoring project 2011/12 had 11 enthusiastic volunteers!

The project continues to owe gratitude to the UCL medical students who are committed and give their time generously to the project. Students commit for a year and see a minimum of 3 clients a week, with compulsory weekly supervision with the Clinical Director. Clinical supervision offers a vital space and support for mentors who see people who are often dealing with past traumatic experiences, or they may be seeing children who are raised within families with traumatized parents.

The project offers a therapeutic learning space to help people adapt and integrate to their new environments. At the start of the this year project we had a waiting list of over 60 clients from 19 countries, with the age range from 65 to 7 years of age who were eager to engage, learn English and integrate into life in the UK. For school children, we offer support with homework and play educational games within a safe and contained environment with the view of encouraging aspirations for the future. For adults, language is the key to integration, so help is offered with both written and conversational English.

Due to the popularity and high number of referrals to the project this year, we started to run two groups for two different age groups: one for 9/10 year olds, run by Julia Darko and another for 13/14 year olds run by Laura Gill. Both groups have been very successful and the mentors involved have used a variety of maths games, art and word games to keep clients remarkably engaged.

We have also started a pilot mentoring group run by mentor Parisa Torabi and CDW Zubeyde Arabaci for women revolving around the concept of Story Telling, motivating the women to eventually tell their own story, either fictional or a reflection their own experiences. The ethos behind this pilot group was to encourage women to find their own voices, gain confidence, integrate and inspire social cohesion by communicating and socialising with people from different ethnicities.

This year, the Mentoring project has seen 131 clients, and we continue to receive new referrals. We would like to express our deep gratitude and thanks to our mentors, Adil Ahmad, Ahmed El Sayed, Alexis Theodorou, Alice Edwards, Hannah Costelloe, Julia Darko, Laura Gill, Parisa Torabi, Rufus Ferrabee, Sarah Dickson and Tom Smith who have all been brilliant, committed and learn fast to engage with their work.

### **Parenting Workshops:**

This year we continued to run monthly Parenting Workshops that offer guidance and support to parents from a refugee background as well as launching a series of 10 Parenting Workshops on an annual basis, covering areas that parents in their feedback ask for support, specifically issues related to mental health and transgenerational and transcultural issues between parents and their offspring, relating to school, understanding Child Protection and Social Services in Britain.

### **Jeremy Corbyn MP Open Surgery:**

Another important support service for clients this year has been the Open Surgeries with our local MP and the Centre's patron, Jeremy Corbyn. These surgeries have taken place throughout the year,

providing an invaluable space for clients to raise concerns with their local MP with the language support of the Community Development Workers, when needed.

### **Further Development of Group work:**

This year, the Centre has set up a number of new women's groups. Based on evaluations of the Somali clients' feedback and consultation with the Somali Communities, the new Somali women's group has been set up by our Somali speaking Community Development Worker Linda Raymond who is working with the women to support their English through the development of a cookbook.

We have also established a Story-Telling group that is helping women from different backgrounds to learn English. This group is run by Zubeyde Arabaci, a Community Development Worker, and one of our Medical Students, Parisa Torabi. Both these groups are designed for women's who are finding it difficult or do not feel confidence to go to the mainstream colleges to learn English and it proves to be effective at breaking women's isolation and opening a sustainable root to integration into a new environment.

I finished with 3 groups during this year, English speaking woman group which I was running for six year; a Farsi speaking woman group for Iranian woman with adolescence which I was running for 10 years, and a young Afghan man group that I was running for two years. My colleague Nerma Biscevic, also end few of her groups this year and further developed two new groups, a English speaking woman group and a young man group which is working very well.

### **Training:**

The Centre has maintained the provision of the one year course on Counselling Refugees, which provides a foundation in intercultural psychodynamic and psychoanalytic theories as they apply to working with refugees; this provides opportunities for students to explore how psychoanalytic techniques may be useful in this context. Ten students successfully completed the course this year.

As you may already be aware, Centre is now offering a full Qualifying Course. The PG Dip/MA course is validated and runs in collaborative partnership with University of East London (UEL). Students who successfully finish the course can register with the United Kingdom Council of Psychotherapy – Council of Psychoanalysts and Jungian Analysts (UKCP- CPJA), and independently with British Association of Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP). This is an Intercultural Psychodynamic Counselling/MA in Intercultural Psychoanalytic Psychotherapy programme that RTC developed utilising decades of experience. This training is the first of its kind in Europe: combining a psychodynamic and psychoanalytic approach with intercultural perspectives. It provides professional training in Intercultural Psychotherapy, specialising in working with refugees and asylum seekers, and other black and ethnic minority groups. The programme provides students with an opportunity to gain in-depth knowledge from clinicians, specialists, writers, researchers in this growing field as well have an active role in the continuing evaluation and re-formulation of psychoanalytic thinking from intercultural perspectives.

### **Volunteers:**

Since the early days at the RTC we have actively recruited volunteers from refugee communities, providing many people with an opportunity to improve their educational or employment prospects in the supportive atmosphere of the Centre. Volunteers are working in areas such as office administration, graphic design, web design, translation, and support work. We are also welcomed many highly regarded professionals to join us in our journey on a voluntary basis and we are fortunate to have our distinguished colleagues contributing to our work mainly in psychotherapy. The in-kind contribution from volunteers this year totalled 7,185.5 hours during this financial year with a value of £210,119.50.

**Structure, governance and management:**

The RTC is a Company limited by guarantee and a registered charity. The Company is established and work under a Memorandum of Association which established the objects and powers of the charitable company and is governed under its Articles of Association. The Executive Management Committee is made up of all Trustees and other co-opted Members. In accordance with the Articles of Association, the last Annual General Meeting of the Company was held on 9th June 2011.

**Financial review:**

The Trustees of RTC also act as directors of the Company for the purposes of the Companies Act and trustees for Charity Act purposes; submit their annual report and the financial statements of Refugee Therapy Centre for the year ending 31 March. Our annual report and financial statements of the Company comply with current statutory requirements, the requirements of the Company's governing document and the provisions of the Statement of Recommended Practice (SORP) Accounting and Reporting by Charities (revised 2005).

**Risk management:**

RTC Trustees and Directors formally reviewed the risks, establishing a system to mitigate such risks at the last strategic away day in 2010 (these are held every 5 years), and the decision will be reviewed, monitored and evaluated by the Governance Committee and in my appraisal every six months and on annual basis. The Trustees address how major risks are considered and mitigated. During the last year, I was instructed by the Trustees to carried out an organisational assessment in close consultation with different member of Trustees and the Management Committee to ensure the Centre's sustainability, this task have been finalised and a part from the challenge of loss of Commissioning Psychotherapy Service from Islington which is due to the current Central and local Government Policy, no further serious risks have been identified.

**Thank you:**

The successes outlined above in my report would not have been possible without the ongoing support and hard work of many committed and generous individuals at and with the Centre at different levels. On behalf of all those involved with the Centre, and on behalf of the people who so full heartedly join us to serve, I would like to extend our gratitude to our funders both statutory and voluntary trusts and foundations for their trust on our work and for their generous support that make our work possible. I wish to thank my fellow Trustees Micol Ascoli, John Denford, Ian Hanham, Josephine Klein, and Lennox Thomas, who have served the charity throughout this year, providing invaluable support, consultation, organisational monitoring, regular evaluations of the service we provide and good governance, ensuring the compliance to our constitutions and charitable regulations. I would like to extend special thanks to all our patrons, particularly Jeremy Corbyn MP, Eva Hoffman, and Professor Roland Littlewood for their continued support whenever and wherever we asked them. I would like to express sincere gratitude to all the staff and volunteers who continuously endeavour to cultivate a caring community within the Centre while providing the foundational services that are essential to meeting our goals. I am infinitely grateful to all those who support our work and am confident that with such a strong team here at RTC, in combination with the generous external support we receive, that a promising future lies ahead.

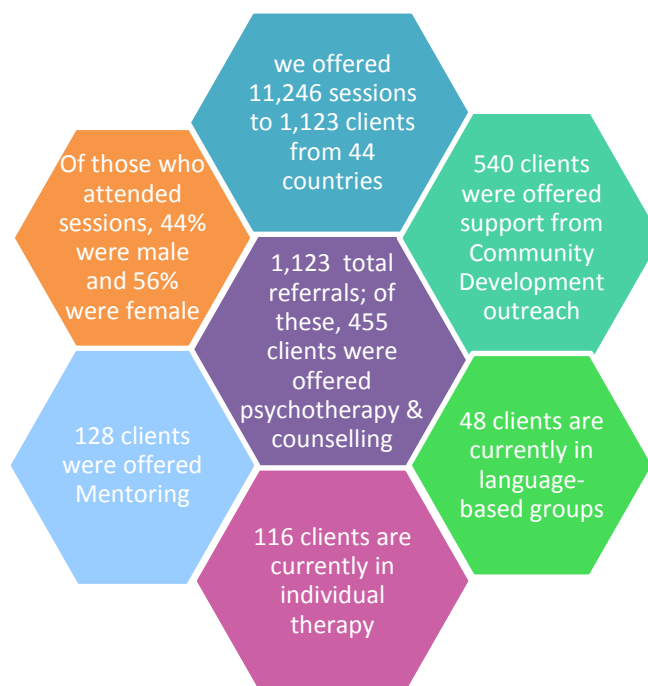


I would like to express my special thank and gratitude to the Training Committee members and our student representatives who has made a much valued contribution towards the development and welfare of this course. I would like to extend my very deep gratitude to our visiting Lecturers, indeed to Adrian Webster for carrying out the evaluation of the course and for his constructive feedback. I owe great appreciation to all course Lecturers—Lennox Thomas, Dilys Daws, Micol Ascoli, Nerma Biscevic, Ngah Zahari, Roland Littlewood, Jo-Anne Carlyle, Lionel Bailly, and Tirril Harris—for all their hard work and commitment to providing quality lectures and instruction for learning to students.

I wish to extend my compliments to those members of staff for their tremendous dedication which allowed us to thrive even when we were up against many difficulties. I understand the significant commitment to spend Saturdays and some evening (currently Wednesday) at work to serve children, young people and their families and I am full of gratitude to staff who prepare to meet these needs, so gracefully and without complaint. I trust these kinds of commitments are rare to achieve and I feel privileged to be able to work with and have responsibility to lead such a wonderful team. I sincerely appreciate their outstanding work and every day I learn from my colleagues how not to lose sight of peoples’ needs and the best way of serving them. I am thankful to them for bringing this aspect of our work to life in all they do for those we seek to serve.

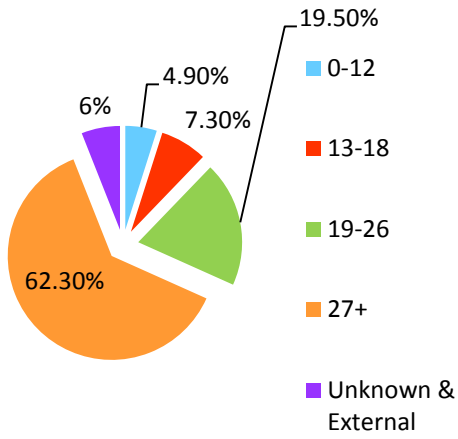
**Achievements and performance:**

Data on the number of referrals and services during  
APRIL 2011 to 31 MARCH 2012

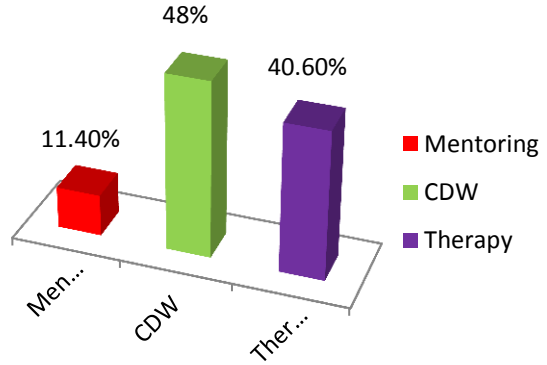


# Statistics

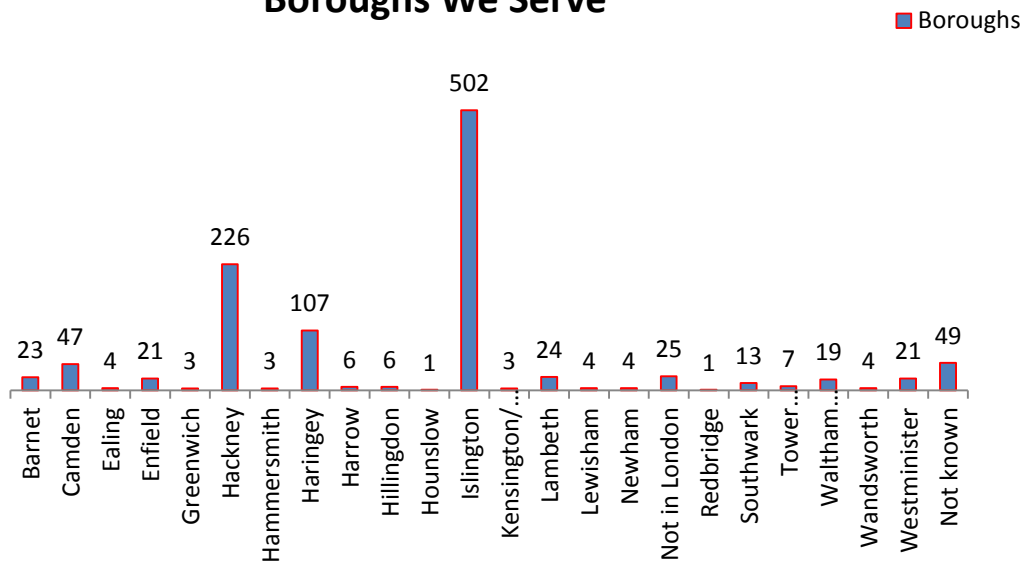
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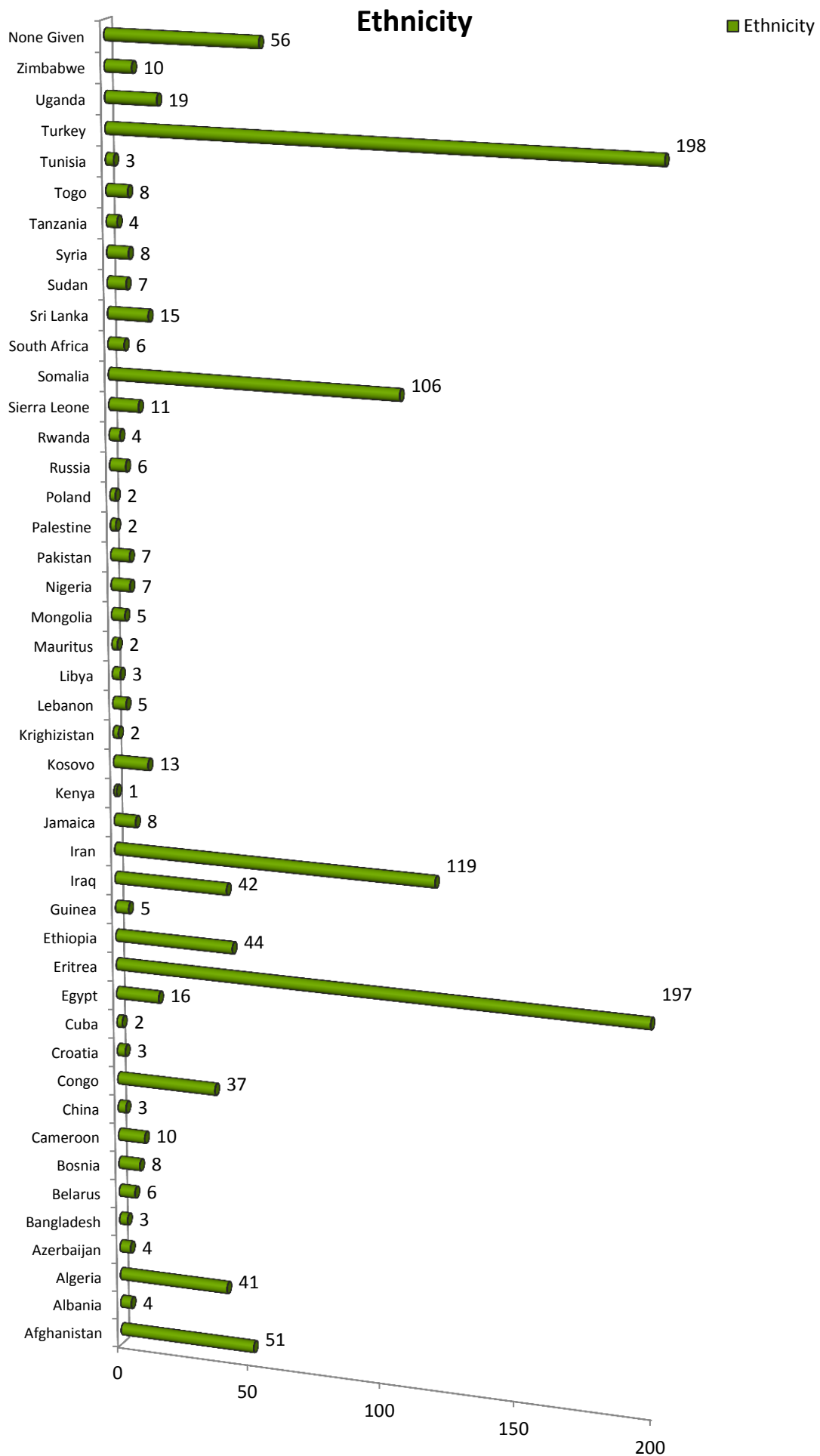


## Services Provided



## Boroughs We Serve





## Plans for future periods:

Our goals for the upcoming year:

- 1) To continue to deliver our services to members of public who come to us for help through the provision of counselling, psychotherapy and associated treatment, giving priority to children, young people and their families, and those who live here less than 10 years.
- 2) To work with our collaborative partnership with the UEL for the PG Dip. & MA training Programme in Intercultural Psychoanalytic Psychotherapy, specialising in working with refugees, and other Black and Ethnic Minorities. Within these programs, we aim to carry forward the successful delivery of professional training.
- 3) To further build appropriate partnerships to enhance dissemination of good practice with specific focus of trauma, dissociations and resilience, rather than vulnerability as well as to improve financial sustainability for the organisation at large.
- 4) To work toward securing commissioning, charitable and individual donor funding for the sustainability of the Centre's clinical and associated services to ensure the same level of services in the current difficult economic climate.
- 5) To extend the use of our building in Leeds Place for external hire to generate income.

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## Some cases from joined team work between CDW, mentoring, therapist and parenting workshops:

***Yasmin\* a 26 year single mother of three*** children came to the centre on the international Women's Day and had thoroughly enjoyed the celebration. Talking to one of the CDW who spoke her language, she recognised that the Parenting Workshops might be beneficial to her and immediately completed a self-referral form to join. Although she was unable to participate in all the workshops sessions due to child care issues (her youngest child had not started school), she demonstrated tremendous commitment and enthusiasm to learn, which greatly benefited Yasmin herself and her children. Just before the centre closed for the winter break, Yasmin asked whether there was any other activity that she could benefit from as her youngest child had started school full time, and she now had enough free time to further develop herself. She indicated that she did not need therapy, but wanted to participate in a group. Yasmin was advised about our conversational English class to improve her language skills and to meet other women in similar positions.

***Fatima\*, a single mother with 4*** children from the age of 17 to 9 whose husband was executed, was referred to the Centre by her GP, indicating that she has been suffering with long-standing depression and has been prescribed different types of medications without too many changes. In the initial meeting Fatima told her therapists that she agreed with her GP's assessment of her mental states and really wanted to make changes. She indicated that having responsibility of raising her children had been challenging and she had been struggling with it. As the children were growing up, she found herself becoming more depressed and agitated. With her therapists exploring the loss of her husband and father of her children, she broke down and said that she had no one to turn to and her children were totally depending on her, and everyone in her community constantly reminded her she had to be strong for their sake. She said that she felt embarrassed that she has not been able to communicate in English properly and never had time to study or do anything for herself. She shared how she knew that she needed time and she felt that she was ready and would like to make changes in her life to be able to get out of depression and insecurities she had been experiencing. She would like to be able to help her children with their homework. She wanted to tackle her low self-esteem and be able to socialize with people outside

her own culture. Even though she could speak and understand a bit of English, she wanted to overcome the feeling of a language barrier that prevented her from having the confidence to interact with others and doing things for herself. She agreed to commit herself to therapy and attend regularly, which she did. At the beginning Fatima was shy and it was difficult for her to be expressive, but as therapy progressed she became more expressive. She started talking about the loss of her husband and how difficult it was for her still to think about it after nine years. By doing so, she started the process of mourning which helped her depression to decrease as well as her social anxiety. In one session she told her therapist that she never could imagine being without anxiety but now she was totally without it which made her feel so liberated. She said she could smile, laugh and even dance at events. She also found herself able to speak English more fluently and read much more, although at times she could get words wrong or pronounce things differently; she said that she would be the first to laugh at herself.

This was clear evidence that Fatima had regained her confidence and was able to move on in life from debilitating depression and anxiety. With these improvements, Fatima first decreased and later stopped her medication in consultation with her psychiatric services. She felt her ability to improve her English increased since she didn't need medications. In her last feedback when her therapeutic intervention came to an end, Fatima expressed her deep gratitude to her therapist, her mentor and her CDW, and indicated that she would like to study further and able to give back to community.

**Oliana\* a 48 year old woman** had been living in London for 10 years with her three children. At the time of referral, Oliana lived with her youngest child in a council flat. She was referred by her GP for therapeutic support. She lost her husband to cancer a couple of years ago here in London and since then she was suffering feelings of loneliness and depression. In the assessment session she said that during the past few months life had become increasingly difficult for her; she could not get out of bed, and got very angry or tearful without specific reasons. Oliana had difficulties speaking English and although she could understand the language, she did not feel confident to speak. In an effort to support her to build confidence with English, her therapist discussed with her a referral to our Story Telling Women's Group (STWG) which she agreed to gratefully.

Her mentors in the group reported that at the beginning Oliana was shy and stressed. The members of the group were encouraging and pushed her to speak in English. They explained that the purpose of the group was to learn and support each other to improve language skills, and that making mistakes was inevitable for everyone. Oliana gradually got involved and now she has become one of the active members of the STWG. After five meetings she said that her first day in the group was difficult and she thought that she would never manage to speak in front of the other member- but the group, the mentors, her therapists support and encouragement and her own willingness proved her wrong. She said that she felt happier now and less depressed. She expressed her wishes to do something to get out of the house and was referred to the CDW to get informed about voluntary work. She liked the idea and understood that working would help her to improve her language skills and give her a chance to meet new people from the British Society. She was provided with information about voluntary job opportunities and is now working in a Charity shop two days a week.

*\*all names have been changed to protect confidentiality*



# EVENTS

## ▣ International Human Rights Day ▣

This year, the Refugee Therapy Centre celebrated Human Rights Day along with colleagues and friends from across the world. In recognition of the trauma and torture people around the world suffer, the day represents a time to reflect on and recommit to Universal Declaration of Human Right. Following time to network and a lovely lunch comprised of food from many cultures, we started the days programme. This year millions of people took to the streets in a stand against injustice endured by so many, demanding change to honour freedom and security for all peoples. Many found their voices using the internet and instant messaging to inform, inspire and mobilize supporters to seek their basic human rights. Social media helped activists organize peaceful protest movements in many cities. The Occupy Movements, which they have come to be called, started from Wall Street, New York, and developed globally, including London, since October 2011, demanding economic and political equality. The Arab Spring also started from Tunisia to Egypt and from Cairo to Libya, and currently Syria - at times in the face of violent repression and Civil War.

The event was opened by our Director Aida Alayarian who introduced the history of Human Rights day. She informed the participants that the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) was adopted on the 10th December 1948. The Declaration adopted by the United Nations General Assembly, consists of 30 articles, setting out a broad range of fundamental human rights and freedoms to which all men and women, everywhere in the world, are entitled, without any distinction. The Declaration asserts that “Everyone has the right to freedom of movement and residence within the borders of each state” and that “everyone has the right to seek and to enjoy in other countries asylum from persecution.” Aida spoke about Article 2 which outlines that: “Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms, without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status”; furthermore, “no distinction shall be made on the basis of the political, jurisdictional or international status of the country or territory to which a person belongs, whether it be independent, trust, non-self-governing or under any other limitation of sovereignty.” Aida emphasised that the fundamental rights associated with this Article are of utmost importance to us at the RTC as it is the basis of equal access to all. We recognised how many people are deprived of the type of psychological health care needed to live a healthy and rewarding life, and that the existence of RTC is evidence of gap in provision of such services.

After Aida, **Fatoumo Ali**, a Somali speaker Health advocate and development worker spoke of her desire to set up a place for Somali people, to try and help those with mental health issues. She talked to us about her visit to her home town in Somalia last year, and how she was disappointed to witness that people with mental health issues were treated badly. She has now set up a small office in her house for her to start fundraising. She gets small donations from the Somali community and last year she raised £3000 which she sent to Somaliland that was used to buy food and sanitizers. Fatoumo said that “eventually she would like to open an aftercare service for those who have finished treatment.”

Then, we heard from **Kolbassia Haoussou**, who personally experienced torture and human right violation in his country of origin. As a representative of a group, Kolbassia has made a valuable contribution to the event as a real testimony of human rights violation around the World. He spoke of his position as coordinator of a group of people who have survived torture and are working to create a network of campaigners who can effectively communicate their opposition to the use of torture whilst supporting

the rights of tortured survivors. His network started with a 5 day 'awayday' which acted as a development stage and the group has received training on media, creative writing, human rights, how to communicate, campaigning and advocacy. Kolbassia spoke of his experience when developing the network and told us "after torture you don't know how to take your life forward, you lose your confidence, so learning how to speak publicly for the well-being of the network is of primary importance as well as being careful not to put people in danger outside the network, particularly people back home, by for example not taking pictures." The network monitors the asylum system and is keen that it is reviewed. Kolbassia spoke of disclosing torture during the asylum process and working with the Chief Inspector regarding the screening process. Through this work he has been able to put forward recommendations for improvement. He finished his presentation by saying that he "does not blame people for how they feel about asylum seekers, they can only know what they hear and see – I feel that if we can talk to young people that the message will be spread – by going to Universities, colleges etc ... I am surprised by how people perceive survivors who are currently based here in the UK; we are not thieves or bad people—just people who were tortured."

Following questions and discussion, those in attendance watched "My brother's keeper" a documentary film of the work of the former UN Special Rapporteur on Torture, Manfred Nowak. On his missions to countries around the globe he finds clear evidence that torture is commonplace in today's world. In the film survivors from China, Zimbabwe and Moldova tell their stories about how torture is used to create fear and obtain confessions - true or false. And a former US interrogation officer talks about how he tortured a detainee in Fallujah in Iraq. Through this action he destroyed the values from his own upbringing, namely to be "my brother's keeper." Many found the film heart-breaking, emotional and touching as well as informative.

At the end of the afternoon, in marking International Human Rights Day together, we paid tribute to all human rights defenders who dedicate their time and resources to helping others.



"What matters in life is not what happens to you but what you remember and how you remember it."

— Gabriel García Márquez



## ▣ International Women's Day ▣

We also celebrated international women's day this year on the 8<sup>th</sup> March 2012. After refreshments, the afternoon was opened by our Somali speaking Community Development Worker, Linda Raymond who welcomed everyone to the event and invited participant contributions. The RTC Operational Manager Sarah Lee started by expressed the importance of celebrating International Women's Day together. She explained that these types of event would provide an opportunity to have dialogues and to find out more about how we can provide services for refugee and asylum seekers women at the Centre. She explained that this year's theme for International Women's Day was "Empower Rural Women – End Hunger and Poverty". Rural women play a key role in supporting their households and communities in achieving food and nutrition security, generating income, and improving rural livelihoods and overall well-being. They contribute to agriculture and rural enterprises, and fuel local and global economies. Yet, every day, around the world, rural women and girls face persistent structural constraints that prevent them from fully enjoying their human rights and hamper their efforts to improve their lives as well as those of others around them. Sarah mentioned that each year Refugee Therapy Centre celebrates International Women's Day in support of the human rights and development of women.

After Sarah the Community Development team and mentors talked about the work they had been doing under the EU Wi-Can project. Linda Raymond our Somali Community Development worker, Zubeyde our Turkish/Kurdish Community Development Worker and Parisa Torabi, our mentor who is a medical student from University College London, talked about the groups they are running. Linda spoke about the Somali women's group which is developing a cookbook and helping women to learn English. Women had already contributed recipes and they were enjoying exchanging ideas on different types of food. They were also enjoying the opportunity to learn English together through discussing food in the group. Zubeyde with Parisa also introduced the Story Telling Women's Group, which is aimed at helping women learn English by talking, discussing and writing about their experiences. The women in this group recognised and talked about how relating to each other by a way of reflecting on their past experiences in a trusting environment helped and increased their confidence and how they learned to enjoy social interaction once again by meeting with other women in a similar situation.



"Today's problems cannot be solved by thinking the way we

thought when we created them."

ALBERT EINSTEIN



“No medicine cures what happiness cannot.”

— Gabriel García Márquez





## **Words from some staff and volunteers**

### **Adil N. Ahmad, *Volunteer Mentor***



Mentoring at the Refugee Therapy Centre has given me a lot of perspective. It has been great to have been able to engage with the societal obstacles that refugees encounter on a really practical level. My clients have been some of the most remarkable individuals I have met. Despite often traumatic pasts, their attitude to the world around them has been incredibly humbling. Clients come with lots of different challenges and it has been a real pleasure to see some measurable improvements. I am very glad to have had this opportunity!

### **Ahmed EL-Sayed, *Volunteer Mentor***



There are a wide range of things which can be done at the refugee therapy centre. Whether teaching English, increasing self-esteem or simply providing a willing ear, the time here is always challenging and fulfilling. The refugees come from around the world and all have their own needs and things to contribute. It has been an excellent opportunity to see how people progress and improve and I could not be happier that I was able to be a part of this process. Some come to improve their English to get a job, others simply to integrate into the country; others still simply as a way of meeting other people and socialising. All leave happy with all that the centre has to offer them. I have been here for a year now. I fully intend to continue in the future and would recommend joining to others. Working with the clients has been an amazing experience, one only improved by the excellent staff at the centre who is friendly but professional. It has been a privilege to be a part of this project.

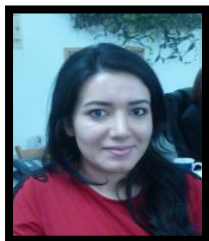
### **Alice Edwards, *Volunteer Mentor***



It might be a small renovated building down an alleyway off Tollington Road but the Refugee Therapy Centre must not be underestimated. The centre provides a rock for people who face difficulties but more than that a driving force seems, from my small window in, to be hope for growth and restoration for people to become who they want to be. As a mentor I have spent time with young people that have not only surprised and amazed me with their capacities for compassion, new ideas and, of course, humour but have really altered the way that I see the society I live in, or thought I did. For being a mentor has allowed me to see, in small steps and with the inevitable occasional pitfalls, development in my mentees but also understand their views of the world. I only hope that they feel that their time with me is even half as beneficial as it is been to me.



### **Ayda Abbasnejad, *Community Development Worker***



I have recently joined the RTC as a Farsi-speaking community development worker. I find the culturally and the linguistically sensitive approach of the centre very appealing and I am glad to be a part of this friendly and dedicated organisation. I am grateful to everyone in the team for sharing their experiences and helping me to learn more about the centre and my role as a CDW. I still have a lot more to learn and I am benefiting from all the support I am receiving from the team. I believe this would be a great opportunity for me to develop a better understanding of the needs and concerns of refugees and asylum seekers and I hope to make a contribution to the psychological wellbeing of people whose human rights have been violated.

### **Eden Melles, *Community Development Worker & Administrative Assistant***



We have had another year of work filled with challenges. In many ways I have enjoyed my work and feel very much engaged. This year my role has changed: as well as continuing as a CDW, offering support to Amharic, Tigrinia and English language speakers, I also have joined the Administration team to ensure the smooth running of the office. These roles have kept me busy, and although both positions are different, they have common goals and ethos. I continue to work towards the well-being of people who come to the Centre with hope; indeed towards better mental health of refugees and asylum seekers. The year has also been exciting as the Centre is starting our qualifying PG Dip/MA Programme which we run in partnership with East London University; it has been pleasure for me to be part of it. With hope and enthusiasm, I am looking forward to another successful year.

### **Hannah Costelloe, *Volunteer Mentor***



I have been volunteering at the Centre for two years as a mentor, and in that time have seen a huge range of clients. The Centre works extremely hard to accommodate the needs of a phenomenally diverse range of people, aiming to improve the living conditions of those of any age, from any ethnic background. Usually I see three clients a week on a one-to-one basis as a "mentor". This role is primarily involved with improving spoken English, to enable clients to live independently and express their thoughts and feelings adequately. During my work at the Centre I have learnt an awful lot about the difficulties encountered by people coming to live in London. The hardship of having to cope with these problems, often in total isolation, whilst carrying the burden of troubled, and sometimes extremely harrowing pasts, is immense. Previously I had never considered just how much some people have to live with, and my time at the Centre has made me far more aware of the difficulties of others. I feel like my work here is worthwhile, but importantly the benefit is mutual, as I gain so much from the experience of talking to the people I meet. I consider myself fortunate to be part of such a fantastic initiative.

### **Kiymet Omur Bivolaku, *Therapist***



It has become my eighth year being involved with the Centre and each year brings its own challenges as it does its rewards. For me, the Refugee Therapy Centre continues to symbolize and be a beacon of light and a place of hope, of containment, a safe space to Be and explore Self and more, a place where diversity finds a common language of humanity, community and equality, of

respect, of peace and love, of hope for a better future, a place where one shares tears and laughter in the face of a world still plagued by wars and destruction. The work of the Centre is remarkable and makes that difference in today's world. Deepest gratitude and respect to all involved in making the Centre what it is and continues to be today, and our deepest respect and greatest admiration to our clients who trust and allow us to walk beside them on their unique journeys.

**Kate Banner, PA to Chief Executive & Clinical Director**



I recently joined the Refugee Therapy Centre, working as a Personal Assistant for the Chief Executive & Clinical Director, Aida Alayarian. Despite the small amount of exposure I have had to the Centre, I can already begin to see what a strong community has been created and the important work taking place. Over the past years, I have been involved with a diversity of community organisations working to promote the human rights of immigrants and refugees. This work has impacted my perspective immensely and has taught me far more about the world than any academic course could claim. I am honoured to have the opportunity to work with such a dynamic and committed organisation whose work aims to serve the community by providing a critical space where people who have endured trauma can build resiliency and begin to live in wellbeing. As a new addition to the RTC community, I am eager for the learning and challenges that lie ahead. I very much look forward to meeting all the staff and volunteers over the next weeks and months!

**Laura Pollard, Volunteer Mentor**

I have been working as a volunteer Child and Adolescent Psychotherapist since December 2011. Every Wednesday evening I make my way to the Centre to meet children, adolescents and whole families with a range of different needs and reasons for attending the Centre. The Refugee Therapy Centre has been a welcoming and friendly place to work and I have enjoyed contributing to the range of work taking place.

**Lennox K Thomas, Consultant Psychotherapist**



The year has seen an increase in young 'unaccompanied minors' being referred for therapeutic help for the first time after many years in the country. Having struggled through education and learned a new language they have been affected by a bout of depression or have been re-traumatised by the trigger of violent incidents around them, in the streets or the park. Some young people have for the first time disclosed abuses that they had survived during or before their escape. Their psychological resilience has enabled them to get on with their lives so far. Some have voiced the desire to start living and not just surviving. The English speaking Men's group continues to support those with mental health problems and the average age of the membership gets younger. Predominately, group members are single with poor social contacts, persecutory belief systems and problems in social functioning. Some have been able, with encouragement, to move on to supportive work or study. The younger and more vulnerable members have particularly benefited from the support of the group. Many new people are coming for therapy having been granted leave to remain or refugee status, but are struggling to get out of the limbo they have been in for many years waiting. Their isolation has left them with difficulties fitting in and a poor command of English. The centre's mentoring programme has been helpful to these people.

### **Linda Raymond, *Community Development Worker***



The RTC has had another successful year, the centre has been growing and we've been growing with it. Our main aim is to reduce stigma and work towards understanding of mental illness to improve awareness within refugees and asylum seeker communities. We try and do this by working with individuals or in groups. This year, as Community Development Workers, we have started concentrating on working more with groups. We have set up our first Somali Speaking Woman's Group which is wonderful. I had to face a lot of obstacles to get there but I finally did it. It was a mission I've been trying to conquer for a while. Within the group I'm working to create a cook book and I have been collecting the women's favourite Somali recipes with their own unique twists. We are planning to make this into a small but delightful book that can be shared with community.

### **Martha Meli, *Community Development Worker***



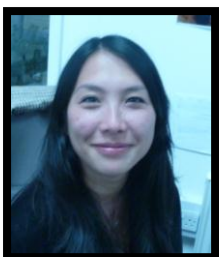
I am one of the newest additions to the team. I feel like a child who is discovering the world. First of all I would like to thank all my colleagues for having made me feel so welcome since the first day and for being so supportive and patient in answering all my questions! As a French and Spanish speaking CDW my job will be focusing on raising awareness about mental health needs among the African French-speaking and the South American communities, and other client support when required. I am very happy to be part of this multicultural organisation which I believe does amazing work in empowering people who have gone through traumatic experiences to re-build their lives. I know I will be learning a lot from the clients and all the people I will be working with. I am looking forward to developing myself both professionally and personally, and to give my contribution to the Centre's achievements.

### **Mohammad Jameer, *Finance Administrator***



I have now been involved with the centre for over seven years and seen its growth from strength to strength due to the commitment of its staff, volunteers and management committee. These next few years will provide a challenge for the centre due to the uncertainty of funding. However I am confident the centre will still provide a first class service and will have measures in place to ensure that this will continue in the future.

### **Natalie Yeong, *Mentoring Project & Volunteer Co-ordinator***



Another year has passed by already! This past year I have had the pleasure of continuing to run the Mentoring project. The project continues to run well with the time donated by the brilliant volunteer mentors. The therapeutic space offered by the Centre and our wonderful mentors provides a quiet pause; a space to think and learn for people who lead otherwise hectic lives, whether they are children or adults. Other than the project, I have also continued to work alongside Eden as part of the administrative team. This year I also joined the Foundation course which has been an incredible roller coaster of knowledge and self-discovery. I would like to say thank you to Aida for being supportive and encouraging, both with my work and learning.

### **Nerma Biscevic, *Therapist***



I am a Bosnian speaking Counsellor currently working full-time at the Centre. I first joined the Centre in 2002. Over the past years I have been working with clients in one-to-one sessions and in groups. Some groups were language based (Albanian, Tigrinya) and I am currently running an English speaking women's group. This year has brought new challenges and exciting developments. I have been able to work with more clients than previously. I have begun offering supervisory support for our CDW and Support Workers which has been an interesting new experience. More recently I have been engaged in setting up a young men's group and I appreciate the encouragement and support that the Clinical Director has offered me in this process. This year I have been facilitating a yet another self-development/experiential student group on our Foundation Course. This group is an integral part of the training. I feel very passionate about being available for students in a particular way as they explore their experiences and negotiate their journey through the course. For me this has been a busy, exciting, challenging and rewarding year. Sadly, we live in a world where violence, torture and displacement are constantly happening. Working with refugees and asylum seekers usually means dealing with trauma, loss and pain. There is a need to witness, acknowledge and facilitate mourning. It is also about acknowledging and celebrating human courage and resilience, fostering dignity, encouraging creativity and strength.

### **Parisa Torabi, *Volunteer Mentor***



Volunteering at the Therapy Centre has been a truly valuable experience for me. The varying backgrounds of all the people involved at the Centre (from clients to employees and volunteers) allows for great cultural exchange, making it a wonderful learning environment for everyone. I have been having one-to-one sessions with clients, mentoring and supporting them to improve their English language skills. Watching their progress and seeing the impact that the skills they have developed has on their lives, such as helping them go to university or get a job, has been the most rewarding aspect. I have also recently become involved in helping a Women's English language group, in which we hope to produce a book, publishing stories of the clients' creation. This has been an extremely exciting project to get involved with and I look forward to seeing its development. The support given to the volunteers by Aida and Natalie has been invaluable, allowing the mentoring project to run smoothly and ensuring the greatest benefits our clients.

### **Rufus Ferrabee, *Volunteer Mentor***



I have thoroughly enjoyed my time working at the Refugee Therapy Centre. It has been a nice change coming once a week on a Wednesday and talking to a selection of individuals of all different ages and backgrounds. It has been a very gratifying experience watching trust build, and consequent relationships develop between myself and the clients. Beyond purely an improvement in the English language, what was most encouraging for me was the noticeable boost in confidence all three of my clients seemed to gain from the sessions. The experience has made me far more aware of both the difficulties asylum seekers and refugees face in the UK, but also the tight knit ethnic communities that form in order to support those struggling with these difficulties. The mentoring scheme successfully gives a point of support away from this difficult environment and the community, to discuss issues anonymously and purely just to let off steam.



### **Sarah Lee, *Operational Manager***



Although I have been aware of the Centre's work for some time, this has been my first year as a member of staff at Refugee Therapy Centre. My role is Operational Manager which includes managing all the operational aspects of the Centre's business. This entails managing personnel, finance and marketing and supporting the organisation to generate income. This has been an engaging challenge and one that is continuing. I have learnt a lot about working in a therapeutic environment, including its challenges and its great rewards. Since I have been here, two new groups have started with funding from the European Commission. These include a story telling group for women and a cookery book group for Somali Women. Both have been a great success and it is rewarding to see Community Development Workers staff engaging with international partners as well. My plan for the coming period is to continue to build the sustainability of the organisation through improved operational systems as well as through partnership and funding development. I am already looking forward to the challenges and successes for the next twelve months.

### **Shahrzad Khamoush, *Therapist***



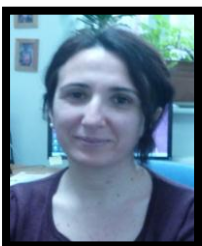
I am pleased to be back at RTC, seeing old friends and making new ones, after several years away. The centre seems busier and more vibrant than ever. The work reflects the increased need for therapeutic and support work within the refugee and asylum seeker community. Although I am at the centre only one day a week and solely involved in therapeutic work, I appreciate and admire the team's hard and creative work in reaching out to this client group, and I value my unique experience at the Centre.

### **Tom Smith, *Volunteer Mentor***



Participation in the mentoring project at the Refugee Therapy Centre has represented a significant time commitment this past year. I am, however, confident that the hours here have been well spent - mentoring and supervision sessions have contributed greatly to my ongoing professional development. The ability to communicate effectively and adapt to changing circumstances in particular is a skill that I will continue to work on throughout my career. In joining the scheme as a preclinical student I felt in some ways a bit overwhelmed initially by the responsibilities and challenges that accompanied the role of mentor. I am therefore grateful to all staff at the centre for their patience and willingness to help no matter how prosaic the problem. Overall I am glad to have been a part of the mentoring project, and hope that the clients I have seen over the past months have themselves benefited from our meetings. I have enjoyed working with them greatly, and wish everyone the best for the future whether or not we meet again.

### **Zubeyde Arabaci, *Community Development Worker***



I returned to the Centre after a year in Turkey. It has been wonderful to be working with my friends and colleagues once again. I have returned to my old responsibilities, working with refugee communities especially the Turkish/Kurdish community. As a Community Development Worker, my main role is to raise awareness of mental health in refugee communities, and assist refugees and asylum seekers who may have some difficulties in mental health and to support them to access in appropriate services. I feel privileged to be working at the Centre which provides a safe place for refugees to rediscover their own strengths. I would like to thank all my colleagues for sharing their experiences and for their valuable support. I would like to say that I always will be grateful to Aida for her mentoring and guidance.





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*Out of the huts of history's shame*

*I rise*

*Up from a past that's rooted in pain*

*I rise*

*I'm a black ocean, leaping and wide,*

*Welling and swelling I bear in the tide.*

*Leaving behind nights of terror and fear*

*I rise*

*Into a daybreak that's wondrously clear*

*I rise.*

--Excerpt from 'I Rise' by Maya Angelou

REFUGEE THERAPY CENTRE

**STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES**  
**(Incorporating Income and Expenditure Account & Statement of Total Realised Gains and Losses)**  
**For the year ended 31st March 2012**

These summarised accounts have been extracted from the full annual financial statements of Refugee Therapy Centre prepared in accordance with the Companies Act 1985. The full annual financial statements have been audited and the auditors' opinions were unqualified. The full annual report and financial statements are to be submitted to the Registrar of Companies and to the Charity Commission. These summarised accounts may not contain sufficient information to allow for a full understanding of the financial affairs of the Charity. For further information the full financial statements, the auditors' report on those financial statements and the Boards' annual report should be consulted. Copies of these may be obtained from the Secretary at 1A Leeds Place, Tollington Park, London N4 3RF.

	Note	Unrestricted Funds 2012 £	Restricted Funds 2012 £	Total Funds 2012 £	Total Funds 2011 £
<b>INCOMING RESOURCES</b>					
Incoming resources from generated funds:					
Voluntary income					
Grants, donations and legacies	2	50,475	107,031	157,506	138,966
Volunteer time	3	200,943	-	200,943	231,047
Activities for generating funds		1,229	-	1,229	661
Bank interest receivable		5,204	-	5,204	570
Incoming resources from charitable activities	4	171,714	106,600	278,314	291,695
Other incoming resources		269	-	269	-
<b>TOTAL INCOMING RESOURCES</b>		<b>429,834</b>	<b>213,631</b>	<b>643,465</b>	<b>662,939</b>
<b>RESOURCES EXPENDED</b>					
Costs of generating voluntary income:					
		20,793		20,793	24,082
Costs of activities in furtherance of the Charity's objects					
Therapy		226,461	211,598	438,059	440,830
Governance costs		27,773		27,773	30,882
<b>TOTAL RESOURCES EXPENDED</b>		<b>275,027</b>	<b>211,598</b>	<b>486,625</b>	<b>495,794</b>
Net income/(expenditure) before transfer		154,807	2,033	156,840	167,145
<b>TOTAL FUNDS AT 1 APRIL 2011</b>		<b>1,508,909</b>	<b>144,000</b>	<b>1,652,909</b>	<b>1,485,764</b>
<b>TOTAL FUNDS AT 31 MARCH 2012</b>		<b>£1,663,716</b>	<b>£146,033</b>	<b>£1,809,749</b>	<b>£1,652,909</b>



1A Leeds Place, Tollington Park, London, N4 3RF, Tel: 020 7561 1587 | Fax: 020 7281 8729  
« Registered charity number 1085922 »