



Refugee
Therapy
Centre

Annual Report

2007 - 2008

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Acknowledgements

The pictures used in this report are of staff, volunteers, students and people we have worked with, and we thank them for their kind permission to use these images.

Feedback throughout this report has been printed with appropriate consent

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Words from a patron

Jeremy Corbyn, MP



On behalf of many people who value the work done at the Refugee Therapy Centre, I want to say a big thank you to Aida and all of her staff.

Within our community there are many people who have survived horrendous experiences of discrimination, violence, ethnic cleansing, and war in many parts of the world.

They need, deserve and should get the fullest possible support from public services in this country. The Refugee Therapy Centre has worked very effectively to help many people. Surviving violent experiences often drive the victims into isolation and depression: they feel unable to communicate their experiences to a wider community, who often have no comprehension of what they have suffered. It can take a long time before support through counselling with community activities is available.

The Refugee Therapy Centre is a charity that relies on the generous support of those who give, and I want here to record my heartfelt thanks to all those who have donated financial gifts, gifts in kind, or time to assist the Refugee Therapy Centre. The relationship between the charitable voluntary sector, and the National Health Service and local social services is never an easy one. We are grateful for the support we receive from official funding agencies but I do make the plea to our government to recognise that investment in Counselling and Therapy services, does help many through very critical times in their lives, and actually saves money in the long run. Successful therapy enables people to lead much more fulfilling lives, and thus enrich all of our lives through their work and contribution to the community.

Too often the media portray asylum seekers as victims who merely want a place of safety and support in this country.

Obviously, every victim deserves a place of safety and support but they also deserve our respect as people who wish to develop their lives and continue to make an enormous economic contribution to the living standards of everyone in Britain. I wish our media would understand that our society is enriched by the contribution of people who sought a place of safety in this country, and we should thank them for what they have done, and for the support they give families and relatives back home.

Things are moving on rapidly for the Refugee Therapy Centre with the purchase of the new building in Leeds Place. We have now received planning permission for its conversion into what will be an exciting facility for the centre and for the local community. This is a huge achievement for the centre which has come so far so fast.

The annual report shows the breadth and success of the efforts made by everyone at the RTC. My heartfelt thanks to Aida and all the staff for their excellent efforts over the past year. I am proud to be a patron.

“We are grateful for the support we receive from official funding agencies but I do make the plea to our government to recognise that investment in Counselling and Therapy services, does help many through very critical times in their lives, and actually saves money in the long run.”

Report from the Chair

Stuart Turner



With so many conflicts around the world, and the subtle erosion of the UN Convention Against Torture in the name of security, the need for appropriate support for those who have fled violence, torture and persecution is as urgent as ever. Now in its eighth year, the Refugee Therapy Centre continues to meet the challenge of providing a professional, accessible therapeutic service for refugees and asylum seekers.

This would not be possible without the continuing support of our friends, donors and funders whose support and generosity is greatly appreciated. They are our valued partners in offering a sanctuary to so many; a place of safety where people can come to terms with their experiences and find their hope and strength again.

This year has been one of successes and challenges. The number of refugees and asylum seekers coming to the Centre's door continues to increase as our reputation grows, although our budget does not seem to increase so rapidly. The Centre's capacity to do so much with so little is testimony to the hard work and commitment of its team of staff and volunteers.

Work has begun on renovating the Centre's new building, and we were successful in obtaining full planning permission from Islington Council. However, the Management Committee has had to make the difficult decision to divide the project into two phases, allowing us time to raise additional funding to complete the refurbishment once the Centre has already relocated. We very much hope to have completed phase one and be in a position to go ahead with the move by early 2009.

We are fortunate to have a strong and involved Board of Trustees and Management Committee. I should like to thank all of the members, Aida Alayarian, Micol Ascoli, John Denford, Josephine Klein, Mary Robertson, Winston Shapiro, Lennox Thomas and Juliet Webster. I should also like to welcome our newest Patron, Keith Miller, a Senior Foreign correspondent for NBC News who is based in London.

“ Now in its eighth year, the Refugee Therapy Centre continues to meet the challenge of providing a professional, accessible therapeutic service for refugees and asylum seekers. ”

Report from the Clinical Director

Aida Alayarian



According to the Home Office statistics, in 2006 the United Kingdom received 23,610 applications for asylum and 31,220 former asylum seekers were accepted as refugees for permanent settlement. The Greater London Authority (GLA) estimates that in 2005, 7% of London's total resident populations were refugees and asylum seekers. In the London borough of Islington where the Refugee Therapy Centre is based, 21% of school children are of refugee origin.

It is now common knowledge that many of the refugees and asylum seekers who arrive in the UK have experienced and witnessed debilitating torture and human rights abuses, as well as loss, bereavement and displacement. Although some people experience atrocities without developing serious psychological symptoms, others have found the accumulated impact of trauma too much to cope with. Psychological stress often shows itself in anxiety, depression, excessive anger, sleep deprivation, thoughts of suicide, memory disturbances, lack of concentration and psychosomatic symptoms - commonly headaches or back pain. This is often exacerbated by problems arising from the experience of forced migration and resettlement in a strange country, loss of roles, social status and support network in the host country, in addition to the uncertainty of the asylum process.

The Refugee Therapy Centre was established in 1999 in response to the growing need in the UK for a specialist therapeutic service which worked with the cultural and linguistic needs of individuals, allowing people the opportunity to be heard and receive help in their own language. We are the only torture rehabilitation centre in the UK to be accredited by the International Rehabilitation Council for Torture Victims (IRCT). We aim to focus our work on refugees and asylum seekers who have experienced torture and human

rights violations.

This year has been an exciting, and at times challenging year for the Refugee Therapy Centre. The report cannot include everything the Centre has achieved during the past year. However I can report out The Refugee Therapy Centre continues to focus on issues of human rights, dignity and empowerment. One of our main aim as always has been to stay in touch with communities that we set ourselves to serve.

People are come to us from a wide range of backgrounds, with specific language and support needs. Many have endured serious human right violations and torture at an individual, family and social or community level. The basic human rights of many people we serve have been violated as the international laws and conventions have not been respected in their countries of origin. At times here in Britain, as well as across, the world many people who have been tortured are not believed and are denied their rights for a sanctuary – adding to their distress. Asylum Seekers whose cases are rejected by the Home Office are denied health care other welfare services. Many of these are people whose health has been harmed on purpose by torture, other forms of ill treatment and human rights violations. But with current legislations, in many cases local authorities and health services do not provide the rehabilitation and redress that failed Asylum Seekers need. One important question that all of us who respect human rights should ask ourselves is how did we get to this point? How can we attempt to restore these basic human rights? Could it perhaps be done by offering a range of needed services to address the multiple consequences of torture? In this climate of distrust, our Centre too is hampered in its ability to meet refugee and asylum seekers need.

“ I would like to thank all my colleagues, friends and family for continuing to be my teachers, my mentors and my sounding boards. I am grateful to so many enthusiastic engagements and commitment crediting the work of the RTC. ”

However addressing the needs of those who come or are referred to us is a complex matter. We at the RTC, as comprehensively as possible, promote an approach where professionals from different disciplines, work together to provide a variety of psychological, educational, social and cultural services. In this way, we give attention to developing and adapting our services to fit the given cultural and socio-economic context of the people who come to us for help.

Our main service remains to be provision of psychotherapy, but we have learned that we have to concentrate on families and indeed build good relations with Refugee Communities. This holistic focus forms part of our strategic approach, and therefore we have increased our support and outreach capacity with four Community Development Workers.



There have been a great many people involved in the year's activities. Without their energy, commitment and enthusiasm we would not have achieved a fraction of what we have done. My heartfelt thanks go to each one of them. Looking ahead, we are at the point of many changes in the coming year. These changes provide us with the opportunity to focus our resources on and look at the way we can steadily develop existing and new functions and services.

I would like to thank all my colleagues, friends and family for continuing to be my teachers, my mentors and my sounding boards. I am grateful to so many enthusiastic engagements and commitment crediting the work of the RTC. Thank you for joining us and coming along in the search for good practice, and towards greater service.

I would like to thank the Board of Trustees and the Management Committee for taking me in, investing in me, understanding me and forgiving me when I make mistakes. I would like to thank them for their wisdom, thirst for knowledge and willingness to share their knowledge with me. I would like to thank them and many other colleagues for being my co-conspirators, my critics, my devil's advocates, and my bungee cords whenever I feel like jumping off. I would

also like to express my deep gratitude to our Building Sub-Committee: Stuart, Juliet and Winston who have together been a body of such strength to me during this challenging process and for their willingness to continue their support.

I hope that next year I will be reporting from the Centre's new premises, the Leeds Place. The journey to a new home is not easy. But we have been privileged to have a great success in November 2007 by obtaining full planning permission for the project. However, the lengthy process of raising funds has caused delays. Our thanks to Jeremy Corbyn and his office for their consistent help and support in this process.

Thanks to Karnac, specifically Oliver Rathbone and Christelle Yeyet-Jacquot for their help, support and trust in publishing the Centre's first book 'Resilience, Suffering and Creativity: The Work of the Refugee Therapy Centre' published in 2007. My special thanks also to Alex Massey at Karnac for his ongoing support and also for helping with the sale of our Seasonal Greeting cards.

Our very special thanks to Islington PCT, City & Hackney PCT and Haringey PCT; to Connecting Communities Plus, to Islington CAMHS, to Comic Relief, to the Sigrid Rausing Trust, to BBC Children in Need and the Cripplegate Foundation for trusting and valuing our much needed services, and for their ongoing evaluation and monitoring, which helps RTC to remain accountable and to learn to grow.

Our gratitude goes to our funders who recognised and shared our assessments of needs and supported our building project. Amongst many, I thank the Henry Smith Charity, the Clothworkers' Foundation, the Penelope Lady Balogh Psychotherapy Trust, the 29th May 1961 Charitable Trust, the Lonely Planet Foundation, the A B Charitable Trust, the Walter Guinness Charitable Trust, the Odin Charitable Trust, the Lionel Wigram Memorial Trust, and the Coutts Charitable Trust.

We thank all individuals who contributed to the Capital Appeal. Thanks to all staff and volunteers who have helped in the capital fund raising.

I express my gratitude to Roger Till who with his high quality presentation about RTC recommended us to his company, GS1UK, for their annual charitable giving. The Centre was shortlisted with another charity. Their panel decision was in favour of the other charity, which provides service to children, but they so kindly donated £400 to our capital appeal. We are very grateful.

Our Centre's volunteers continually inspire us with their creative acts of generosity. Helena Wickham, one of our very first young but so professional mentors, heard about our Capital Appeal raised £329 through caroling. We are grateful to them both.

I would like to express my immense gratitude and esteem to all the therapists who have worked at the Centre during the year, and also to those who have seen clients in their own consulting rooms. They are each an important part of the Centre's activities and make it possible for the Refugee Therapy Centre to serve as a hopeful home for many who have been forced to leave theirs behind.

My thanks, love and admiration goes to all volunteers who have made huge contribution to the Centre this year. Amongst them is Susan Gunning who is a true treasure to the Centre and it is my pleasure to work with her. She is an asset and her consistent support in many different areas, including the new role as an honorary minute secretary to the Management and Training Committees on Fridays. She is an efficient librarian for staff and students, and a general source of support with administration. My thanks go to Fidan Boz for her work and professionalism. Opening the door to students on our Friday course and helping with office administration, – she is an asset and it is a pleasure to have her in the office. My special thanks to Zoya Khan who has been a great help, assisting with research and administrative duties. Her flexibility and willingness to help is greatly appreciated. I welcome and thank Asha Al-Sharif, our newest volunteer, who translated our Parenting Booklet into Arabic and assists the Support Outreach team. My thanks to Dahira Khalid who translated our Parenting Booklet into Somali while she was busy studying linguistics at university.

I would like to express my gratitude to all those who have volunteered as Mentors during the year, for their admirable and much-needed hard work in supporting our clients to learn English and British culture. Mentors work towards easing the process of integration for many who may otherwise find it difficult and challenging to settle in the new environment. Amongst them my gratitude goes to Charlotte Cassis, Bernard Freudenthal, Eve Turner, Flora Greig, Helena Wickham, James Barnett, Jill Neale, Kate Pittordou, Kiran Azam, Lara Wood, Nadia De Wouytch, Sandeep Parmar, Shital Tirodkar, Tamsin Morrison, William Young, and Zoya Khan.

I would also like to mention the work of our Steering Committees, especially the Refugee Community Representative Steering Committee, whose feedback ensures that our services meet the needs of the people we set ourselves to

serve.

My special thanks and appreciation goes to the small team of dedicated staff who support me in running the Centre: our Finance Administrator Mohammad Jameer who keeps our books in order and responds to our needs, even at very short notice. I am very grateful for his availability and his vital contribution in managing the work of the Centre. My special thanks to Zubeyde Arabaci who has taken on the role of Administrative Assistant in addition to her Support Work. Greatly over-qualified Zubeyde performs her work with a thoroughness and enthusiasm to which we are indebted. My deepest gratitude to Miriam Philip for her outstanding work in co-coordinating volunteer other projects, so efficiently, competently and with such dedication.

During the year, we had to say goodbye to a number of our much loved colleagues. Saying goodbye has not been very easy for us, and we miss them greatly, while celebrate these new chapter in their lives. Our dear Tiffany Barker left us to marry Tim, who was one of the Centre's first volunteers in 2000. He is now a doctor, working in a hospital and Tiffany is working in Social Service outside London. We miss her greatly but I am sure many children and families are benefiting from her full-hearted engagement in helping people in need.

We also had to say goodbye to our dear Patricia Oteza, our Spanish speaking therapist and support worker. She has worked at the Centre for many years in different capacities. She is working with young people in Venezuela. She is missed by all of us and we eagerly hope for her return. Another very dear colleague that we recently said goodbye to, who was offered a position in Japan, is Natsuko Ukai. We are sure that she continues doing the good work she was doing here in addition to her academic responsibilities.

In March this year we had to say goodbye to our dear Miriam. She has been an invaluable asset and essential part of the Centre. Her presence is greatly missed by everyone at many levels. Although we miss her, we are sure that wherever she is, she is going to make a difference in people's lives with her good heart combined with her wisdom.

The role of Volunteer and Project Coordinator has now been filled by Amanda Shaw, who I am pleased to welcome to the team and look forward to working with. We sadly had to see Lee Amin leave, but very grateful and pleased to welcome Alastair Stokes who kindly came to our rescue to work as the Building's Project support worker.

Services provided during the year

In the last year we treated refugees from over 37 countries. The top four countries of origin were Turkey (15%), Iran (14%), the Democratic Republic of Congo (12%) and Eritrea (10%). According to Human Rights Watch's World Report 2007, torture remains common in these and many countries. Although reports of torture and ill-treatment in Turkey now seem to be less than during the mid-1990s when torture was routine, today many of our Kurdish and Turkish patients that we are serving were held in detention and tortured. But persecution and torture are still occurring. For example, in Diyarbakir (Turkey) it has been reported that during the March disturbances, hundreds of people were detained and allegedly tortured, including approximately two hundred children. Almost all those detained during this time reported having been beaten, stripped of their clothes, hosed with cold water, or deprived of food. In Iran, it is also reported that the government routinely tortures and mistreats detainees, through prolonged solitary confinement, slashes and many other form of torture. In D.R. Congo, torture is even used against civilians accidentally caught up in the civil war by government soldiers and also by local armed opposition groups in different areas. In Eritrea ongoing political and religious persecution and the clampdown connected to evasion of national service have contributed to thousands of people being detained and torture has frequently been reported (Human Rights Watch World Report 2007).



Many of our referrals are women who have experienced rape as a weapon of torture. Torture is often used to control a particular political, social or religious opposition group, so many times we hear from our clients that family members may be threatened or may be forced to witness the torture of their loved ones. Whether or not each person has been

tortured or witnessed torture themselves, the whole family must deal with the psychological stress of rehabilitation, exile and issues of resettlement. These can affect several generations, and children in particular often suffer from feelings of guilt or personal responsibility about what has happened to our parents. Also, as the result of their parents' experiences children we see develop secondary psychological problems through the 'transmission of trauma' which is the direct result of their parents' suffering.

Working with children, young people and their families

As the result of the trauma they have experienced - be it personal or through their loved ones - young refugees may express their distress in a variety of unconscious, non-verbal manners, which can negatively influence those around them. The extent to which forced resettlement and the disruption of normal life routines have impact on children's mental health which should not be underestimated. Difficulties adjusting to the new school system are compounded by the complications young people experience at home.

The Centre prioritises working with children, young people and their families. Helping children to understand their experiences and feelings can help to relieve their distress and enable them to make positive changes. If refugee children and their families are helped early enough, much emotional suffering and future difficulties may be prevented.



Many of our referrals are often mother of young people. Some have been raped, tortured, imprisoned and subjected to other forms of sexual and state violence. Recognizing experiences of torture and violence is critical in providing appropriate rehabilitation to help these mothers as well as their offsprings.



Mainstream therapeutic services may be difficult to approach and indeed, inappropriate for many refugees and asylum seekers. Evidence suggests that specialized services are most appropriate and effective in meeting the needs of refugees and asylum seekers. Lack of English and limitations in interpreting services, as well as long waiting-lists are barriers to effective mental-health interventions for refugees.

The aim of our service as a therapy centre is to help traumatised refugees and asylum seekers to feel empowered and to ease their process of integration and acculturation in order to resume a life as full as possible. This takes time and treatment must take into consideration the patients' individual needs, problems, expectations, views and cultural references. The service we offer helps individual refugees and asylum seekers, to begin to recognise, understand and work through their experiences.

We have privilege of being able to offer our services in 21 languages so, people have the choice of receiving therapeutic support in English or in their own language. Some clients prefer not to see a therapist or support worker from their own cultural background because of feelings of mistrust, guilt, shame or embarrassment about what has happened to them; or because they feel rejected by their own people and country. However, torture does not produce the same outcome in every individual or in every socio-cultural setting. The majority of the Centre's therapists and support workers have a refugee or immigrant background and bring with them a wealth of linguistic, cultural and shared experiences. All receive intercultural supervision to help them to consider these factors in their work.

Bi-lingual support work and outreach

There are many excellent organisations in the UK providing much-needed advice to refugees and asylum seekers on immigration, housing, welfare and other issues. However, it is still difficult for individuals with various practical needs to find the right information about where and how to find help when feelings of depression, frustration, stress, anxiety and isolation are overwhelming and language is a barrier to communication.

The team members coordinate with each other to offer drop-in hours every Thursday between 10.30am and 12.30pm. This is important as sometimes people telephone or turn up at the Centre without knowing what they want – they just come to see how we can help them with, as they have so much need. Support Workers give people time and space to think about what are their most immediate needs, what can be addressed and how they can feel empowered and capable of managing their lives. Support Workers offer assistance to help clients who may have mental, physical or social problems resulting from being a refugee or in the process of seeking asylum. Support workers assess clients' particular needs and discuss ways to help them adapt or improve their situation. They also help clients to think positively and work towards agreed goals; they observe their progress and provide regular feedback to the team in the supervision group.

Outreach work includes specific intervention to reach and involve refugees and asylum seekers who can be at risk and not know how to contact available services. Outreach workers visit Refugee and other Community Organizations in the field to target different refugee groups. The workers aim to reach those marginalised refugee and asylum seekers who are suffering from mental health problems in isolation and would not normally be known to mental and social care services.



Mentoring project

We continue to provide weekly one-to-one mentoring sessions in a safe and containing environment. This is a highly effective means of providing service in helping people develop their English skills 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 confidence building. 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 also help children to think about other situations; specifically, where there are issues related to a child being bullied as a result of being a Refugee or Asylum Seeker pupil.

The majority of our mentors are UCL medical students, so they gain experience working with refugees and asylum seekers and this we hope, will inform their future practice and understanding of refugees' health needs.

I am pleased to report that this year, building on the success of our individual mentoring project, we have seen the start of 'group mentoring' at the Centre. This means that we can increase the amount of time we can offer and increase opportunities for social interaction and confidence building to refugees and asylum seekers who are isolated and lack the opportunities to practice their English language skills on a daily basis. It is still early days, but we are hoping to evaluate this service and seek funding to develop it when we move to the Leeds Place.



Introductory Course on Counselling Refugees

The one year Introduction to Counselling Refugees is continued running successfully. Students come from British and many Refugee backgrounds and this significantly improves the opportunities of learning from each other. Demand for the course is increasing each year, which reflects the need for our approach in education compared to many other counselling training.



My very special thanks to all those who have lectured on the course this year: amongst them Dilys Daws, Dorothy Daniel, Josephine Klein, Lennox Thomas, Mary Robertson, Micol Ascoli, Roland Littlewood, Stuart Turner and Tirril Harris; also to Pat Land and Marie-José Loncelle-Burris for leading the seminars which follow the lectures, and to Nerma Biscevic and Lennox Thomas for running the two experiential/developmental groups.

Thanks to members of the Training Committee who ensure the smooth running of the course and contribute to its development. My very special thanks to Adrian Webster for his continuous and generous support. His evaluation has been and is vital to the development of the course. His consistency makes it possible to add more value to his assessment each year. In his last evaluation, he wrote:

“ As in previous years, the course organisers, staff and students are to be congratulated for their commitment to this high quality introductory course, which is run on a very slim budget. The course provided valuable opportunities for development for those who may not otherwise get access to further education of this sort and has put in place the support structures to ensure student's success. ”

Open Day 2007

The Open Day took place on Saturday 23rd June 2007 to celebrate the Refugee Week in London and to mark the United Nations International Day in Support of 'Victims' of Torture (26th June).

Last year we held a special screening of *The Secret Life of Words* as part of the Centre's annual Open Day. The film is written and directed by Isabel Coixet. It follows Hanna (Sarah Polley), a factory worker who lives alone in a barren apartment, wears a hearing-aid, and keeps to herself with a rigorous daily routine of identical meals, a fresh bar of soap every day, and needlepoint work at night. While on an extended holiday in Northern Ireland, she volunteers to nurse a burn victim Josef (Tim Robbins). While Hanna help him back to health, Josef, who has suffered temporary blindness, reaches out to her urgently, wanting to connect with her. As his brutish and passionate demeanour contrasts sharply with Hanna's solemn and quiet manner, she refuses to reveal anything about herself, even her real name. But soon she starts to recognize parallels between her own isolation and that of the others on the oil rig. She eventually grows to care

for Josef and shares with him a painfully severe secret from her past. This opened doors, for the two strangers from different worlds to come together and help heal one another.

After the film we had a brief discussion giving the audience the opportunity to reflect on the film's powerful message against torture. After a difficult, but thought-provoking morning with the focus on torture, we moved towards a celebration of Refugee Week in the second part of the event. Guests were invited to a multicultural lunch, cooked by the Centre's staff and volunteers. Then our Chair, Stuart Turner, read a message of support from our Patron Jeremy Corbyn MP, who was unable to attend the day as he was speaking at a Peace Conference in the USA. This was followed by reports from staff and volunteers about their work at the Centre. And, as always, the day finished with music from around the world and dancing with all the staff, volunteers and guests including people we are serving, joining together in celebrating the Refugee Day and week as well as feeling united in fighting torture.



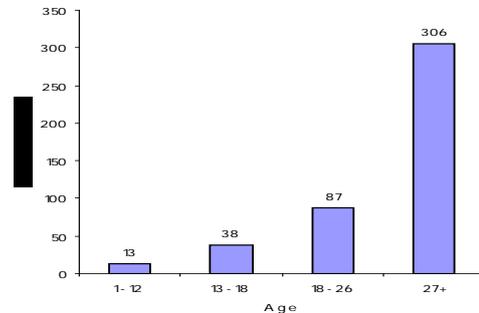
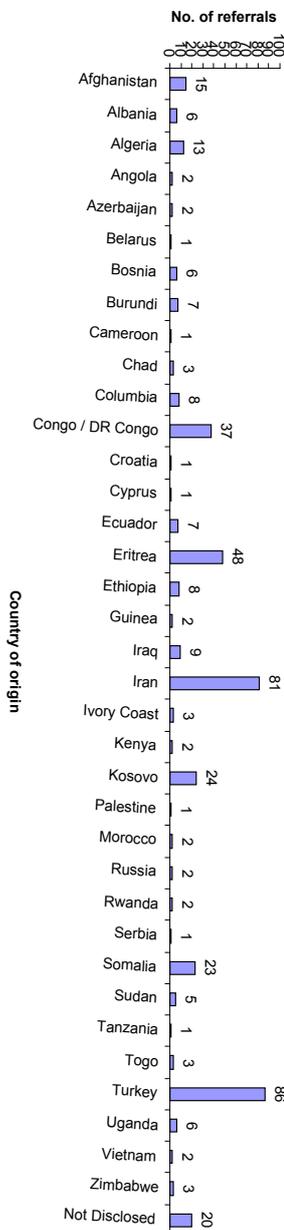
Those we help

A summary of services provided between 1st April 2007 and 31st March 2008

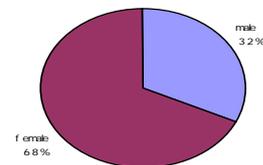
Received Therapy	•••••	251
Individual	•••••	148
Group	•••••	103
Mentoring	•••••	71
Support	•••••	102
Group Mentoring	•••••	20
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TOTAL		444

In 2007-08 we had referrals of clients from 37 countries:

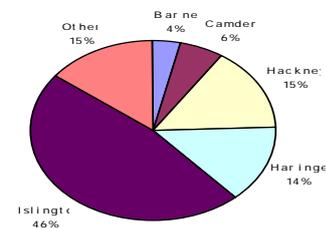
138 of these referrals were children or young people (aged 26 or under):



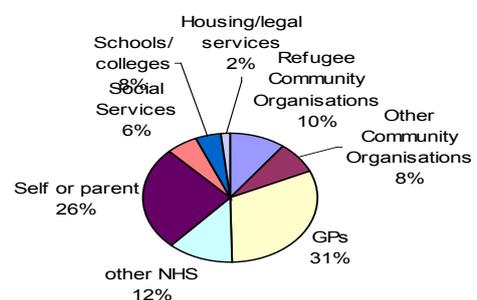
The majority of our clients were female:



Referrals by borough:



Sources of referrals:



Words from staff and volunteers

Aisha Al-Sharif

Volunteer Support Worker

I am one of the students of the refugee therapy centre on an introductory course for counselling Refugees, since October 2007. At the same time I work as a volunteer in administration, I translate the leaflets and booklets from English into Arabic and work as an English to Arabic interpreter.

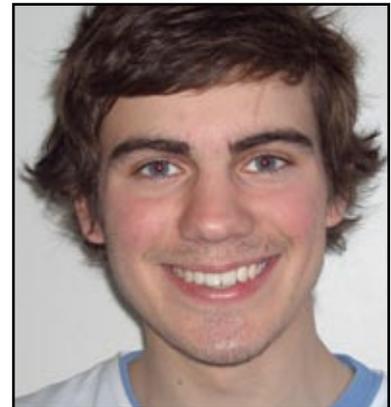
I would like to thank Dr Aida for the privileged opportunity that she gave me to learn and be one of the centre's team. Dr Aida has a warm heart in which every body can find a space. The centre embraced all types of people who are from different countries, culture and beliefs but they all share a common ground where they believe in humanity and their will to support vulnerable people. The centre is a warm and welcoming place for every one coming through the door. I would like to thank all the staff for their support.



Alastair Stokes

Building Support Worker

I have just started working for the Centre this year, though I have known of its work for some time through volunteering to help in Open Days with Sam taking pictures and filming the events for the Centre. I feel privileged to be involved at this exciting time when everyone will be moving over to the new building and I have relished the role of Building Support Worker, which has allowed me to use my knowledge from my architectural training to help the Centre in achieving its aims. I hope the new building will see the same passion and growth as the last.



Amanda Shaw

New Volunteer and Project Coordinator

I'm thrilled to inherit this post from Miriam's exceptional stewardship. Everyone at the Centre will miss her greatly – including me! It's been a joy to work with her during the handover and I've learnt so much alongside her excellent and thorough leadership. I also feel so privileged to benefit from Aida's expert and amiable guidance.

I am excited to continue facilitating the wonderful work of the Support Outreach Team, the Centre's volunteers and those involved in the Introductory Course. Contributing to the Centre's many worthy initiatives is only surpassed by working with the incredible staff and clients. The welcome I've received from everyone here I'm sure portends of the many good things to come!



Dorothy Daniell

Psychotherapist and Clinical Supervisor

This year it has been a joy again to work with a regular Supervision Group. I thank the Group members for their commitment to the work and run their sharing of experience. It is a strong learning time for us all. As I come in to the Centre I am aware of so much activating that goes on. There is both change and continuity. Thanks and best wishes to all who keep the work at the Centre going and especially to Aida for her inspiring leadership.





Eden Melles

Support Outreach Worker

It just seems like yesterday but another year has already gone! Well my work at the RTC has been a learning journey, I have learned so much from each and every one at the centre. The centre's staff and volunteers are different in every way and together we make an outstanding team. There are times though when you feel like you have not done much but then all the hard work and effort somehow seem to add up when you realise how much of a difference you have made on someone's life by just listening to them.



Eve Turner

Volunteer Mentor

This is my first year mentoring at the Refugee Therapy Centre. It is giving me valuable experience that I would never have hoped to get at my age, being only fifteen. Mentoring is extremely rewarding whilst presenting me with many challenges. It is continually stretching me as I am always trying to create new, novel, interesting ways to teach various aspects of the English language. Mentoring is not just about teaching English however; we have discussions about current affairs, talk about recent films and share opinions on books we've read. I have particularly enjoyed learning about another culture and another way of life. I love the warm, friendly atmosphere at the Centre and this experience is an enjoyable and exciting part of my life.



Fidan Boz

Administrative Volunteer

I have been volunteering at the Refugee Therapy Centre more than one year. I have a lot of work experiences in the Centre. I was able to contribute to the administrative needs of the Centre. Such as typing, making photocopies, updating data-base, etc but I need to learn more stuff for the Centre and me. I am very grateful to be volunteering at the Refugee Therapy Centre, and also I am very happy to work with the warm office staff. Thank you so much I have been settled in.



Flora Greig

Volunteer Mentor

For the past six months I have had the fortune of being able to take part in the mentoring scheme at the refugee therapy centre. At the moment I see three clients weekly in one-on-one sessions. Each of the clients has a different particular requirement from mentoring, and my work involves huge variations in activities from preparing for Key stage 3 exams to discussing what factors can prevent people accessing healthcare. As well as the differences in the content of the sessions each mentor sees a wide variety of people, from those who have been in the UK for quite a while and those who have just arrived. I have really enjoyed my work at the centre, it has made me appreciate how difficult teaching is, and has made me acutely aware of the problems facing refugees and asylum seekers as they try and adapt to their new environment. It has also been particularly rewarding as you can witness the successful results of your sessions first hand, as your client hopefully goes on to pass his exams or be confident enough to apply for a job.

Helena Wickham

Volunteer Mentor

I have only been volunteering as a mentor for four months now, but despite feeling that I have a lot to learn, I have gained so much from my experience so far.

Being still at school myself gives me both advantages and disadvantages when I am mentoring. I do find it very challenging to help someone not that much younger than myself and to begin with I didn't feel that I could have the skills and knowledge to do such an important job. On the other hand, I like to think that the fact that I am still at school helps my client identify herself with me, and helps me to empathise with her and understand the problems she faces at school.

Mentoring at the Refugee Therapy Centre has reminded me of how lucky I am to have a really good education. It has brought home to me the fact that there are so many bright, hardworking young people who just don't have the opportunities that others do. I feel really privileged to be volunteering at a charity that is helping some of these people.

Mentoring is an extremely worthwhile and rewarding thing to do. I hope my client has benefited as much from our sessions as I have. I have learnt so many new skills that I will use throughout life and I would like to thank Aida and Miriam for giving me such a fantastic opportunity.



Josephine Klein

Supervisor

Retiring, I am now less often at the Centre, but still often enough to continue to be impressed by our thriving office. What a variety of responsibilities! Mentors, other support workers, therapists, all writing up their notes, the regular office workers, Mohammed working on our accounts, Miriam doing office things or helping our volunteers in her friendly way, so reassuring and capable, Aida patiently on the phone, or dictating, or escorting someone up to her room! Coffee, tea and affection flow, mugs are conscientiously washed after use, and sometimes there is a glimpse of deliciously prepared food. Everyone puts up with the overcrowding and hopes for the wonderful space we shall have when we finally move to premises more appropriate to our size. The office is a wonderful place, and I am glad still to be around for occasional supervision and such.



Kiymet Omur Bivolaku

Counsellor

I am an Albanian speaking Counsellor from Kosovo and this will be my fourth year of being involved with the Refugee Therapy Centre. The Centre has seen me through being a student, a volunteer trainee Counsellor and today being a qualified Counsellor and working as such with a variety of clients. The work that I do here with my clients from different backgrounds is very enriching and rewarding yet challenging but definitely exciting. I enjoy my work a great deal. To me the Refugee Therapy Centre resembles one big happy family where one finds warmth, support, respect and genuine love and care. What I particularly like about the Centre is that it is highly professional but keeps a very friendly and relaxed atmosphere.



Everybody, including our clients, comes from a different part of the World and speaks either one or more languages, has a particular history, tradition, faith, personality and cultural or professional background, yet what we all have in common is our shared Humanity. Here, we are all equal. We all learn from one another, share in our grief but also happiness. It is always sad to say goodbye to wonderful staff we meet at the Centre who eventually will move on in their journeys of life. From our hearts we wish them all the best and feel thankful and privileged to have known them.

Myself, I still have no plans of leaving but would like to say thank you for the immense support and encouragement of my wonderful supervisors, colleagues and particularly Aida whom I consider the soul of this Centre. Her commitment and devotion to her work and her staff is an inspiration to all of us.

Kosovo having declared itself recently Independent was a particularly happy day for me and my community, and again, a heartfelt Thank You to all of you at the Centre who congratulated me and shared on this very special event.



Lennox Thomas

Psychotherapist and Clinical Supervisor

This has proved to have been a busy and exciting year. We have had new projects and finding bigger premises. With this many possibilities are open to our service users and ourselves. It did not take long for us to outgrow our present home. We will be able to offer a broader range of therapeutic educational mentoring and counselor training opportunities to Refugee communities. The Centre continues to provide consultation and capacity building to other refugee organizations in the borough dealing with mental health. The refugee men's group conducted in English continues and early members have moved on finding employment, attending courses and generally feeling relieved from the symptoms or distress that they came with. Next year will be a year of new ventures.



Linda Raymond

Support Outreach Worker and Trainee Counsellor

It seems only yesterday since I first came to this wonderful multicultural organization, I began my journey as a student, then as a Somali outreach support worker and finally into a trainee counselor. Looking back I must say with the help of the centre I came a long way.

Being part of the Refugee Therapy Centre has enabled me to meet such wonderful, hardworking and determined people from all walks of life.

The past year has been a busy time for me combining my Outreach Support work and Counseling but I have to admit it was a challenging experience which I thoroughly enjoyed, working with each and every client of mine. It has been an inspirational journey for all of us, seeing different people from different cultures and background coming together as one, and being able to speak freely of their experiences and breaking down the stigma barrier about mental health. I have benefited immensely from my supervision group, I'm learning so much from my supervisor and fellow therapists it is a real valuable experience I'm gaining, I'm still on my own therapeutic journey I'll let you know when I get to my final destination. The Refugee Therapy Centre is a safe haven for each and every one of us.

Marie-José Loncelle-Burris

Psychotherapist

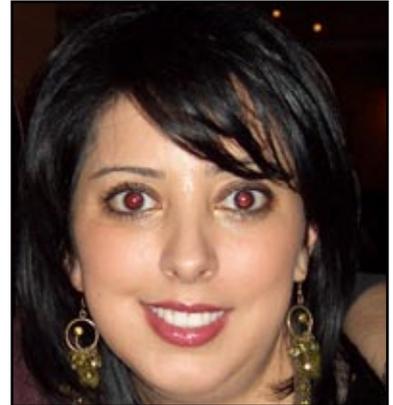
As I am now in my second year at the Refugee Therapy Centre I realize how much I have learnt in that relatively short a time. I am very grateful for the experience, first of all to the clients for sharing themselves with me; to the interpreters who make the work possible; to my supervisor Dorothy Daniell for constant support and encouragement and to all the staff for their cheeriness and constancy. I have also had the chance to lead seminars for the students on the Certificate in Introductory Course on Counselling Refugees which has been a most enjoyable experience as the students come from all over the world and are so eager to learn. There could not be a better place to grow and develop.



Maryam Nourbakhsh

Support Outreach Worker

I'm now coming into my second year at Refugee Therapy Centre; I feel very privileged to be working at the centre. It has been a challenging and very rewarding year, which I have learnt a lot from my work. The friendly and safe environment at the centre help people who has suffered in past to heal and belonged to somewhere when they don't feel they belong to anywhere. I would like to say thank you to Aida and the team I am working with.



Miriam Philip

Volunteer and Project Coordinator

I am writing this in my final weeks as Volunteer and Project Coordinator, as I am leaving the Centre for Zanzibar! When I was a student on the 2005-6 Introductory Course on Counselling Refugees, we learnt about Winnicott's idea of the 'facilitating environment'. When I look back over the last 3 years, this is how I think of the Centre - as a facilitating environment for me and for so many others.



I am pleased to see how the Support Outreach Workers are like responsive mothers to clients who come to the Centre in great distress, coping with so many difficulties trying to find their feet in this country. I have been privileged to observe how each Support Worker, in her own way, is able to calmly listen and contain her clients' anxiety and frustration, using supervision to express her own feelings and consult with the team to decide how we can best help each individual. The information and encouragement the team then pass on is vital in helping people feel empowered and able to try to improve their situation.

Similarly the mentors pour their enthusiasm and commitment into meeting each of their clients' individual needs – whether the person wishes to focus on spelling, grammar, reading the newspaper, passing a citizenship exam or simply building their confidence to chat in English – the mentors are there for them. It is wonderful around this time of year to see the mutually rewarding relationships that have been built between mentors and clients, and the confidence that individuals have gained.

I have gained so much personally from being involved in an organisation where everyone is working together to make a meaningful, lasting change in people's

lives – people who's right of a peaceful life has been taken away from them. In my time here I have seen how therapeutic it has been for me to be part of this, as I'm sure it has been for so many other staff and volunteers, wherever we have come from in life. I am really proud to have worked in a truly intercultural place. It is not easy for me to leave the warm, dedicated team at the Centre where I feel so at home. But I am glad to leave things in Amanda's capable hands and to see where someone new will take running the projects. I wish Aida and the team all the best with the successes and challenges of the future.



Mohammad Jameer

Finance Administrator

I have now been involved with the centre for three years as their 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 to make the experience an enlightening one- both strengthening and creating bonds between those that encounter 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 that have suffered. A nouveau horizon awaits the centre at its new home, enabling us to expand the services that we deliver as well as being a pillar for the society at large.

Lastly I would like to thank Aida for the opportunity to work in a stimulating and harmonious environment.

Nadia de Wouytch

Volunteer Mentor

I came to the centre a few years ago to take a one year Course on Counseling Refugees. The centre, the course and the dedicated professionals working and teaching there, became a real source of inspiration for me. During that year I learned so much about the work carried out to help refugees, as well as learning about myself that I wholeheartedly wished to contribute some of my time to the centre.



I have recently started to volunteer as a mentor for a group of women who wish to improve their English, and generally want to become active members of the society they now live in. I found that being a mentor, to me means learning along with my clients; we somehow teach each other, we learn from each other. The different cultures and personalities can bring a wealth of information and interaction. It is my wish that this mentoring group will be of real support and inspire the people who joined it. So far during our sessions we read newspapers and discussed current events, to help our clients with comprehension and spoken English. We also aim at encouraging our clients to explore and use the facilities provided in their area, such as libraries, colleges etc; this is to help the process of integration. Very often it is our clients themselves who will ask for specific help in one area or another, and together with my colleague we are available to provide any support we are able to give. I hope to continue with this kind of work, and am looking forward to learn more on how to support best the wonderful people who come to us, with the invaluable guidance and experience from our Clinical Director, Aida.

Nerma Biscevic

Counsellor

I am a Serbo-Croat speaking counsellor. My involvement with the Refugee Therapy Centre began in 2002 when I was looking for placement as part of my counselling training. During my work placement I had the opportunity to attend a training course, provided by the Centre, on counselling refugees. This experience was precious for my client work and my subsequent work with students, as I was encouraged to take on facilitating an experiential student group.

Over the past six years I have been conducting assessments and working with clients individually and in a group. Sometimes, the work can only be done with the help of interpreter, which brings additional challenges for all those involved. I am immensely grateful to my supervisors: Josephine Klein, Aida Alayarian and, more recently Dorothy Daniell, for their priceless input, encouragement and support. Their humanity and professionalism are truly inspirational. Many thanks go to my colleagues in supervision group for their useful observations.

The Centre fosters the ethos of empowering refugees and asylum seekers to deal with their psychological difficulties. To see a positive change in the way the client thinks and feels about themselves and their place in the world is always encouraging and rewarding.

Philo Muteba

Support Outreach Worker

It's been almost 2 years now since I have been involved with the Refugee Therapy Centre as a bilingual support outreach worker. I speak French and Lingala. Working at the centre has really broadened my horizons and I feel very privileged to be part of the centre. I really like the atmosphere we are working with at the centre. I learn a lot from my colleagues and I enjoyed the supervision sessions with Aida for support work and with Josephine for French speaking Women's group that we recently started with my colleague Marie Jose Loncelle-Burris.

Working as a support worker has enabled me to meet different people with different issues and needs. Being able to help my clients is a great joy and an extreme privilege for me. The Refugee Therapy Centre is a safe haven and healing place for many people.

Shahrzad Khamoush

Counsellor

I originally started working with RTC in 2001-02. The experience inspired me to train as a counsellor. I have started working with the centre again since March 2007. I am happy to be part of an organisation where all seem so dedicated and focused on the task.

It has been a full and enriching year. I am enjoying my work, and have learnt a great deal from my two supervisors and colleagues. We are all excited and look forward to moving to the new building.





Shital Tirodkar

Medical Student Mentor

I started mentoring at the Refugee Therapy Centre in October 2007. I feel extremely lucky to be part of the team and would like to thank Aida and Miriam for giving me this wonderful opportunity.

During each session I learn so much about my clients and their diverse cultures, languages and lives. The regular sessions help us to develop a close working relationship and to tailor our sessions to each client's individual needs. I look forward to seeing my clients every week and enjoy watching them progress.

It is fantastic to participate in helping them achieve their goals. I admire my clients' strength, determination and enthusiasm. I feel their qualities are something to aspire to given the difficulties and hardship they have suffered in the past. I always wonder whether I would be as well accomplished as they are given the same circumstances.

Through mentoring at the centre I have learned so much about others and myself. It has given me a whole new perspective. Mentoring has been amazing experience and I would recommend it to anyone. I would like to thank the staff for creating such a warm and safe environment for us to work. The Refugee Therapy Centre is a truly wonderful place.



Zubeyde Arabaci

Support Outreach Worker and Administration Assistant

I am now coming into my second year at the Centre, when I look back at the past two years I would like to say that I learned a lot personally and professionally. I am working as a Turkish-speaking support Outreach Worker and also part-time Administrative Assistant. I like both my roles at the Centre.

I would like to say that learning process will never end up in the Centre. I have been privileged to work with my colleagues, my supervisors Aida for Support work and Josephine for Turkish Speaking Women's Group that we recently started with my colleague Shahrazd from whom I learnt a lot. I have to say that during my supervision with Aida I learned to focus on refugee people's positive side and encourage them instead of seeing them as a victim.

I would like to thank all my colleagues for their amazing support and sharing their experience with me.

REFUGEE THERAPY CENTRE

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES

**(Incorporating Income and Expenditure Account & Statement of Total Realised Gains and Losses)
For the year ended 31 March 2008**

	Unrestricted Funds 2008 £	Restricted Funds 2008 £	Total Funds 2008 £	<i>Total Funds 2007 £</i>
Note				
INCOMING RESOURCES				
Incoming resources from generated funds:				
Voluntary income				
Grants, donations and legacies	2	43,253	336,742	379,995
Volunteer time	3	196,965	-	196,965
Activities for generating funds		865	-	865
Bank interest receivable		6,820	-	6,820
Incoming resources from charitable activities	4	187,816	54,871	242,687
TOTAL INCOMING RESOURCES		435,719	391,613	827,332
RESOURCES EXPENDED				
Costs of generating funds		23,175	-	23,175
Costs of activities in furtherance of the Charity's objects				-
Therapy		313,637	114,793	428,430
Governance costs		27,986	-	27,986
TOTAL RESOURCES EXPENDED		364,798	114,793	479,591
Net income/(expenditure) before transfer		70,921	276,820	347,741
Transfer between funds	14	82,897	(82,897)	-
Net incoming resources after transfer		153,818	193,923	347,741
TOTAL FUNDS AT 1 APRIL 2007		517,350	24,635	541,985
TOTAL FUNDS AT 31 MARCH 2008		£ 671,168	£218,558	£ 889,726
			£ 541,985	

Grief

by Ben Okri

“ Grief ought to be used
To create more love;
There’s no greater force
From below or above.

Such grief as we have seen
Could water the roots
Of a new world dream.
Give the dead the power

To change the world
Into something higher;
That we may listen to hunger’s
Cry and turn injustice into a flower.

This is the strange blessing
Of those flaming towers:
That we may wake up to world suffering
And with vision sweeten humanity’s hours ”



TOGETHER AGAINST TORTURE

21st anniversary of the UN Convention Against Torture



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