



## Annual Report - 2016

### Overview of 2016

- Number of away days held: 17 in 14 locations
- Average number of refugees / asylum seekers attending each away day: 40 (range 11- 70)
- Number of refugees / asylum seekers who have participated in the away days: in excess of 300 with over 40 families
- Number of different nations represented at the away days: 32 (Syria, Sudan, South Sudan, Somalia, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Iran, Iraq, Libya, Oman, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Afghanistan, Russia, China, Sri Lanka, Algeria, Albania, Cameroon, Kurds, Nigeria, Ghana, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Gambia, Lebanon, Wales, England, Laos, Australia, Ireland and South Korea.
- Number of Facebook group members: 308
- Number of email newsletter recipients: 332
- Number of Twitter followers: 298
- Fundraising events - 5 and many donations
- Lobbying, awareness raising, education - numerous emails and petitions signed, 5 specific awareness raising stalls and 2 education sessions in schools

### 1. Respite / Sanctuary/ Away days

- City of Sanctuary has now set up a Sanctuary Breaks stream and commend us upon our activities. On their website they state: *“groups are starting in non-dispersal areas and there are people all over the UK and Ireland who want to find a way help sanctuary seekers, even when there is no such demographic within their own communities. Sanctuary breaks are an excellent way to connect asylum seekers and refugees with local people who wish to host them for a short period – a day, a weekend or even a week. These breaks provide very welcome respite for asylum seekers who are sometimes stuck for many years and are unable to travel, cannot afford any leisure activity or holidays and are unable to take a break from the city to which they have been dispersed. Activities that have brought hope and resilience to asylum seekers, enriched communities, enabled new friendships and support networks and made a real difference to the lives of all involved.”*
- Our experience so far has been extremely positive with over 17 such day breaks and no negative comments or actions. We had one issue that we discussed in accordance with our child protection policy with the conclusion that the parents are responsible for their children but that we would try to offer assistance if needed.
- This year we had away days in Llanfihangel Talyllyn, Llangenny, Talgarth, Brecon, Elan Valley, Llangorse, Talgarth Sports Festival, Craig y Nos (Twice), Brilley, Christ College Brecon, Bronllys, Llwyn Celyn and Caerphilly Castle (2 days) and two visits to Hay Festival (summer and winter) with smaller groups. Initially volunteers provided transport in cars but this added complexity and proved impractical so we now use a 53 seater coach.

- Each of these visits requires careful planning with close partnership working with people in contact with people seeking asylum, reliable transport and people prepared to host and arrange activities and food. We have been very fortunate to have found Unity in Diversity Swansea (UID) and the Swansea Bay Asylum Seekers Support Group (SBASSG) and in particular Wayne, Maria and Phil who identify people in need of a break and arrange for them to be at a collection point. This requires considerable work and patience! We have also been fortunate to have found Bluebird coaches who are not only the cheapest but also very accommodating, friendly and Stuart, our usual driver, rises to every challenge we give him as well as providing commentaries!
- We have written up each of these visits and reported upon them in our meetings. Special thanks for hosting go to Jonnie and Tina Hill, Clare Shirtcliffe, Francesca Bell, Andrew and Penny Leonard, Severn Trent Water Authority and the Elan Valley Trust, Melrose and Robert East, Alison Eagle, Linda Kells, Virginia Brown and Rachel Giacconi, Kate Thompson and Amos Clarke, Jo Eliot and Noel Kingsbury, Emma Thompson and Simon Hill, Sue and Gez Richards, Lynne Rogers and Philip Oliver, Kasia Howard and the Landmark Trust, Carla Rapoport, Lumen Prize, Arts Council and CADW. In addition, there is always a large team around each of the hosts, without whom the days could not take place and there is now a regular core of our supporters who turn up to help out, meet old friends, make new ones and chat! The visits to Caerphilly were assisted by the Arts Council and CADW and enabled over 120 people living in Swansea, Cardiff and Newport to visit and see a fascinating exhibition and a castle. The visits to Elan Valley, Christ College and Landmark Trust were fully funded by their respective sponsorship.
- **Plan** - we will continue this activity and have days already being planned. We have the opportunity of several weeks volunteering with the Landmark Trust during the year for up to 6 people seeking asylum or refuge to learn skills. We have further opportunities of stewarding with Hay festival.

## 2. Other Activities

- With the support of Hay Festival we were able to join with PEN Cymru for a day and refugee writers from South Wales were able to meet, discuss and hear some talks. In addition, we were able to host three men seeking asylum who acted as stewards for 3 days (again thanks to Hay Festival for making them so welcome and Jon who provided his house and other supporters who helped with transport).
- We also sold refugee writers' books supplied by Hafan Books.
- We hosted a destitute asylum seeker for SHARE Tawe during the summer with various kind hosts but in general we have found that we are too far from Swansea and friends for this to be a beneficial long term help. We have offered online admin support to SHARE Tawe via several supporters.
- We were able to help with English conversation pending formal English classes for the Syrian families who were resettled in Ystradgynlais and several supporters have been able to provide ongoing support and friendship. In addition, we were able to donate some clothes, kitchenware and toys and a little money to help tide over until benefits were paid.
- We prepared a report for the council about our thoughts on resettlement and how we felt things could be done slightly differently for the next resettled families to benefit more.
- We issued a statement for international Women's day in March and participated in Refugee Week with a concert at the Globe in June.
- **Plan** - we hope to continue to benefit from the support of Hay Festival and work with PEN Cymru. We will continue to support Share Tawe and have just started to provide International English Language Testing System (IELTS) classes in Swansea via two of our supporters (Mac and Erica). We will try to support/ highlight Refugee Week again.

### 3. Goods

- We have been fortunate to have been given free access to 3 stores over the last year. Initially we used a store at Hay Castle, which we moved from before Hay Festival. We had boxes in store at Brecon Beacons National Parks until August and a storage area at Ty Mawr Limes offices since May. We have drop off points at the Liberal Democrats Office in Brecon and St Mary's Church Hay. Talgarth Library started to be a drop off point in July and the Old Temp Fish Bar in Ystradgynlais since December. Without these drop off points and storage we could not do any large scale collections so we are extremely grateful for the support and help.
- We established a store users group, who oversee collection, sorting and onward movement (Sue, Gez, Virginia, Trevor, Carrie, Sally and Ailsa) calling on others to transport as needed.
- Virginia has since August coordinated donations from Aldi and Morrisons which we give out at Away Days or take down for the drop-ins to distribute.
- We were able to send goods to Calais via two of our supporters and subsequently several times via Newport2Calais.
- Brecon Foodbank have been very generous with supplying food for many of our visits.
- 'Love at First Bite' has generously given us Gluten free cakes and muffins for several of our away days.
- We have had 'Jumble Non Sales' of clothing and household items at most of our away days which seem to be popular and we have taken donations at least monthly to Swansea drop in centres (Trevor, Mary, Sean, Virginia, Lawrence and Ailsa) and occasionally to Cardiff (Ailsa, Lawrence and Sue) but generally they seem to have plenty of clothing.
- Bags, pens and pencils in substantial quantities have been provided by Margaret and Pat.
- We have successfully provided pairs of football boots and some kit for the UID football team.
- We donated a table football table to Newport Sanctuary and have arranged a long term loan of a pool table.
- With help from Paul Funnell and Brecon Beacons National Parks and other supporters we were able to provide a number of Laptops to UID for their IT/English classes and these laptops are also shared with SBASSG. In addition we provided about 4 laptops and TVs for the Ystradgynlais families.
- We delivered one set of welcome boxes to a person who was granted refugee status and was moving into his own flat. We delivered the rest and other sorted and labelled goods to Swansea Humanitarian Aid Response Project (SHARP) run by Neezo.
- We were able to provide over 200 Christmas presents for Swansea Christmas parties and ran a very successful campaign for 'Reverse Advent Calendars' (over 50 were delivered), which we distributed just after Christmas, with more still arriving. Bronllys and Talgarth Schools kindly provided filled shoes boxes for all the children in the resettled Syrian families in Ystradgynlais and additional wrapped parcels and bags for Swansea.
- Plan - we hope to collect less clothing as this is easily available in the cities. We will continue to collect some bedding and warm clothing for the winter months and some household items especially microwaveable items. We will still collect toiletries. We will continue to receive donations from the supermarkets and deliver these to

Swansea or use on Away Days. We will have an ongoing need for football kit and boots. Laptops/computers are likely to always be useful.

#### **4. Fundraising**

- We have been extremely fortunate to have very generous supporters and live in a welcoming and kind area. Our financial report will give full details but we have had substantial donations from many individuals (both anonymous and named) and groups as well as holding a number of successful fundraising and awareness raising events.
- Hay festival attendees were very generous in their support via a ticket exchange.
- Brecon Thai Restaurant gave a substantial donation after a charity launch night.
- City of Sanctuary gave £1000 to support our respite day programme.
- Talgarth Male Voice Choir and the Monday Choir held a concert at St Mary's church in May, which raised over £1000.
- Three concerts at the Globe over the year with many musicians who gave their time and skills for free have raised several £1000s and a quiz evening in Brecon helped to fund the Brecon away day.
- Many donations in kind, such as the Arts Council, CADW, Severn Trent Water Authority, Elan Valley Trust, Landmark Trust, Christ College Brecon, have allowed days to be provided.
- Plan - we will share a fundraising event with the Brecon Volunteer Bureau on February 4<sup>th</sup> 2017. Other events are being planned.

#### **5. Lobbying, Awareness Raising and Education**

- Margaret, Hilary and Ailsa met with our MP to discuss our concerns about the displaced children from Calais and many others have written to him over the last year on many occasions about issues relating to asylum seeking or refuge.
- We have received support from our AM by provision of a drop off point, also attendance at respite days and sending a message of support to City of Sanctuary.
- We attended the City of Sanctuary AGM in July, Sanctuary in Parliament in November, Sanctuary in the Senedd in December and the Refugees Welcome summit in September.
- We affiliated with Refugees Welcome a campaigning group and support their campaigns.
- We have had information stalls at Hay Festival, Brecon Show, Brecon PromFest, Brecon Cathedral for a concert in July and the Christmas tree festival in December.
- We held a Refugee day selling teddy bears, books and jumble in at the Hay Festival with craft workshops for children.
- In addition, we provided refreshments at The Hay Film Festival in March and the Fair Trade Market in December for a share of profits.
- We held a candle lit Vigil at Brecon Cathedral for the displaced children of Calais and refugees generally in December.
- We have delivered awareness raising sessions at Cradoc School and Gwernyfed. Several of our supporters are planning to do additional training to help deliver similar sessions.
- Neil and Cate have helped enormously throughout the year with design and production of posters and flyers.
- Plan - we will continue to publicise the group's activities and the needs of refugees and asylum seekers. We will continue to work with Refugees Welcome and the lobbying aims of City of Sanctuary. We will continue our work with schools and explore whether local schools wish to achieve School of Sanctuary status.

## 6. Website and Social Media

- Throughout the year, our website and Twitter feed have been expertly maintained by Jo and Facebook by Sean. Articles have been written by Sian, Mike, Ailsa and Jo. Sian's articles, in particular, have been singled out for praise by the National City of Sanctuary Executive. City of Sanctuary has supported us with our website and we now have both a Twitter feed and Facebook feed on our website, providing a single place to keep up with activities.
- Plan - we hope to have our email updates added to our website.

## 7. Therapy Group

- The group has delivered listening skills training and are available for advice and support. Coordinators: Hilary, Maggie and Philip.

## 8. English Teaching

- Were able to deliver some English conversation classes and some English/ Arabic dictionaries to the families in Ystradgynlais. Have set up IELTS sessions at UID.

## 9. Artists' Group

- The group has participated in almost all of the respite days and have ongoing projects.

## 10. Writers' Group

- This group are offering to help aspiring refugee writers with their work.

## 11. Expenditure

- We have made grants to several groups working with asylum seekers and refugees, including SHARE Tawe, Asylum Justice, ShelterBox and UID.
- We have established a Hardship Fund with an Executive Group who can agree urgent funds for individuals or groups in urgent need. Further details are given in the finance report. Otherwise most of our funds are used to support our away day programme and in particular transport.

## 12. Administration

- We have a Child Protection Policy and a Child Protection Adviser. We have a number of resources on the website including flyers about our activities.
- Plan - we may need a Press Policy and additional support with admin tasks.

Ailsa Dunn 2/1/2017

**Website:** <http://hbtsr.org.uk/>

**Facebook:** <https://www.facebook.com/groups/hbtsr>

**Twitter:** [@hbts4refugees](https://twitter.com/hbts4refugees)

**Address:** HBTSR, c/o 1B The Pavement, Hay on Wye, HR3 5BU