

Meeting the challenge

Asylum has been at the top of the political agenda throughout 2005. During the general election, it was a major campaigning issue for both of the main parties. The government has continued to make changes to the asylum system, focusing on preventing people entering the UK and on removals. Meanwhile, the key issue of poor decision making in the asylum process, which could lead to people being returned to face persecution in their countries of origin, remains unaddressed.

The Immigration, Asylum and Nationality Bill 2005; the fifth piece of substantive legislation on asylum and immigration in 10 years, focuses on strengthening border controls, fast tracking asylum applications and control and detention of people claiming asylum. Indefinite Leave to Remain (ILR) for successful asylum applicants has been replaced with an initial five year term of temporary leave to remain. During this period the applicant can be removed at any time, if the Home Office judges it safe for them to be returned to their country of origin. This creates a new level of unnecessary insecurity for people whose claims have succeeded.

Yet refugees continue to settle down and rebuild their lives in Scotland, and to integrate into the life of the community. As Scottish Refugee Council enters its 21st year, we continue to develop and improve the range of services and support that we offer. We challenge unfair legislation and press the government to live up to its responsibilities under international law.

Working with our partner organisations, voluntary and community groups, we campaign for a better deal for refugees, so that everyone who comes to Scotland as a refugee can live in safety, security and freedom.



David Walsh, Chair

Scottish Refugee Council objectives

Scottish Refugee Council's mission is 'to build a better future with refugees in Scotland'. Our key strategic aims for 2005 included:

- Providing advice and support to help refugees
- Helping refugees to rebuild their lives and make a home in Scotland
- Working in partnership with refugees to help them integrate
- Advocating on behalf of refugees with local government, the Scottish Parliament, Scottish Executive and at Westminster
- Promoting positive images of refugees and challenging negative stereotypes
- Strengthening the involvement of refugees in the work of Scottish Refugee Council at all levels
- Ensuring that Scottish Refugee Council provides a high quality service
- Helping staff contribute their skills and knowledge to the development of Scottish Refugee Council

Note on terms: In this report Scottish Refugee Council uses the generic term 'refugee' when referring to both people who have been granted refugee status and people seeking asylum. A distinction is only made where there is a technical or legal imperative, or where failing to do so could obscure the meaning of the text.



“When my wife and I arrived in Scotland we spoke no English and had been through a very bad time. Scottish Refugee Council provided interpreters and gave us the practical help and advice we needed. They really listened to us and took our concerns seriously. We felt that we could rely on them.”

Prendush Lleshi - ALBANIA

Giving advice and support

Scottish Refugee Council provides comprehensive advice and support services, ranging from help in navigating the asylum process, to ensuring that people's basic material needs are met. We also ensure that people get access to more specialist services, such as health care for pregnant women, legal advice and help in tracing relatives lost during flight. Between January and September 2005, our team dealt with over 1700 enquiries and provided over 1100 advice sessions each month.

We provide a welcome and support to new asylum seekers through the Scottish Induction Service funded by the Home Office, before the government's National Asylum Support Service support begins.

When people first arrive they are accommodated in temporary furnished flats at the YMCA in Glasgow. Each person takes part in a series of briefings, designed to help them understand the asylum process, their rights and responsibilities, and the support that Scottish Refugee Council can provide. Since the new service began in May, our advisers have helped over 200 people who have come to Scotland seeking asylum.



“We left our country because it was bad there for us. Now we have been in Scotland nearly four years. We feel safe here. Our son is happy in school and he is doing well. Our daughter is very young and knows nothing else. This is her world. We like Scotland and its people, It feels like home. We want it to be our home.”

Tatyana, Vladislav, Artoium (9) and Maria (2) - UKRAINE

Helping to make a new life

Finding asylum is only the first step in the long and often painful process of rebuilding shattered lives.

Our Family Reunion Service works in partnership with the Red Cross and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) to help people travel to the UK, for reunification with their families. It is a long, complex process, as conditions in the country of origin may be chaotic or unsafe for the relatives left behind. This year we have succeeded in reuniting 27 people with their families in Scotland.

We give advice on housing options and welfare entitlements, to help refugees make informed choices before they move from asylum support to mainstream benefits. We are also working with the Scottish Executive, the Commission for Racial Equality and Glasgow Housing Association, to find ways for refugees to have a greater say in how services are delivered and in housing provision. This year we helped over 570 people with accommodation and welfare problems.

Our education and employment advice workers offer help in looking for jobs or study opportunities, and in securing recognition of existing qualifications. We are building links with local employers to encourage them to hire suitably qualified refugees. This year we helped over 700 people get access to English language training, enter further and higher education, or secure employment.



"I left my country because I had to, not because I wanted to. I was one of the lucky ones. I got out. Now I am working to try and help other refugees integrate. It is a very difficult situation for them. The country is unfamiliar and they have to deal with many problems. It is very important to help them learn English. This is the beginning; the key to everything."

Londi Beketch Luyeye - DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO

Becoming part of the community

Playing a role in the wider community is a vital part of the integration process. Our community development team help refugees develop their own groups and build bridges with local communities.

This year, we helped refugees set up 11 Refugee Community Organisations (RCOs) and gave them practical help with everything from developing their administration to securing funding. We are also supporting the development of a common voice for all RCOs through the Scottish Refugee Policy Forum, which seeks to influence service providers, politicians and policy makers.

Through the Framework for Dialogue project we support eight networks of refugees and local community activists in tackling a range of issues, from community safety, to improving relations with the police and tackling bullying in schools. These groups link directly with 10 Refugee Support and Integration Networks across Glasgow which help local communities and refugees work together to promote integration and combat racism.

Scottish Refugee Council also supports a Refugee Women's Group and other women's organisations that work with charities, public bodies, voluntary agencies and other service providers, to help them identify the particular needs of refugee women.

"My colleagues and I will never forget the great support on all levels that we received from Scottish Refugee Council in setting up our association."

Mahamad Al Shagra,
Secretary: The Iraqi Scottish
Home Association

"The Community Development team has given us much practical assistance with everything, from helping set up our constitution to finding venues for our meetings."

Lakhmal Kahawela
President ScotLanka



“My husband and I left our country because we were part of a linguistic minority. We were being treated very badly. At first it was all very strange here; I had never lived in such a high building as I do now. Most people are friendly. It is good that they campaign for us, but we also need to help ourselves. I am in an association with several other African women, where we try to find answers to our problems.”

Sabina Etchu and Beltus (3) - CAMEROON

Speaking out for refugees

During the 2005 General Election, asylum was a major campaign issue for all the main parties. To counter the many myths and prejudices that were being aired during the campaign, we distributed information sheets and booklets setting out the facts about asylum to election candidates and political activists in Scotland, and political journalists. We attended all major party political conferences and produced a “Questions to Ask” leaflet on asylum issues for distribution to the general public. We continue to campaign on behalf of refugees with local, Scottish and UK national government, and in Europe.

In Scotland, one example of the positive impact of our policy work was the decision by the Holyrood Parliament to extend the protection offered under the Prohibition of Female Genital Mutilation (Scotland) Bill to asylum seekers and visiting students; at present similar legislation in England and Wales only protects UK nationals. We also work in partnership with the cross party group of MSPs on refugees and asylum to campaign for a fairer deal for refugees in Scotland.

Our Chief Executive has been appointed Vice Chair of the European Council on Refugees and Exiles. This puts us at the heart of pan-European campaigning on asylum issues. We play an increasing role in the development of UK and European asylum policy through campaigning and working in partnership with the Asylum Rights Campaign, UNHCR and other non-governmental organisations. We promote the importance of the 1951 UN Convention on Refugees, access to asylum in Europe and high standards for reception and integration.



“We have been here for five years now. Our sons speak only English with a Glasgow accent. They are Scots now. We cannot return to our country. It is not safe for us there. We try and keep busy and do something useful in the community. There is no point in just sitting around at home.”

Lakmal and Dilhani Kahwala - SRI LANKA

Promoting positive images

Scottish Refugee Council promotes positive images of refugees through the media, and helps refugees speak for themselves in the press. This year we gave 53 media interviews and played a key role in the development of two documentaries on asylum issues. Through our media training programme we equipped 20 new members of our Refugee Media Group with interview skills and helped refugees speak for themselves in over 40 media interviews. We are also helping refugee community organisations improve their capacity to deal with press enquiries by providing training.

In partnership with Oxfam, Amnesty International, the Red Cross, and National Union of Journalists, we produced “Fair Play”; a guide to reporting asylum issues for journalists, and launched a new journalistic award for factual reporting on asylum issues.

Refugee Week is an annual celebration of the contribution that refugees make to the arts, culture, music and theatre in Scotland. This year’s event was the biggest ever, with over 75 attractions, ranging from drama and music, to sports competitions and carnival. The Refugee Week Job Fair, which successfully linked more than 100 refugees with potential employers, was one highlight of the celebrations. Several people obtained firm offers of employment as a direct result of the Fair.



"I got a lot out of volunteering with Scottish Refugee Council. Colleagues made me feel very welcome and I was treated in exactly the same way as any other member of staff. I have learned a lot about refugee issues and how the asylum system works, as well as developing my office skills and improving my CV for future job applications."

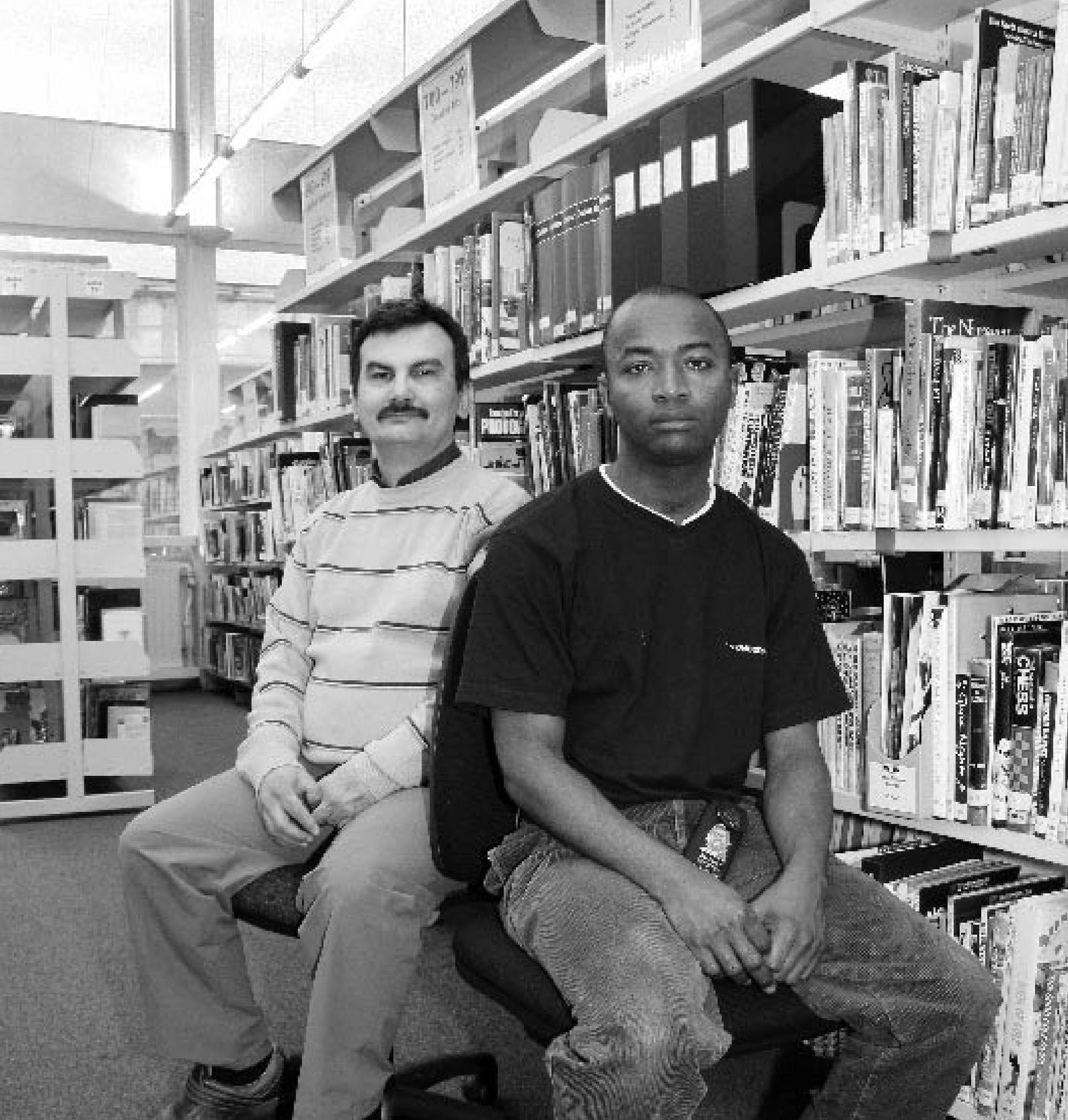
Jamie Spurway - Scottish Refugee Council volunteer

Getting refugees involved

Refugees play an important role in our work at all levels. Participation at board level ensures that refugees are involved in governance, including setting the strategic direction of the organisation.

An increasing number of our staff come from refugee backgrounds. In addition, we currently have 15 volunteers, 10 of whom are refugees, working across all departments. Each volunteer has a staff mentor who offers advice and support. Volunteers are encouraged to identify objectives, which are put into their own Personal Development Plan. Refugee staff and volunteers contribute valuable first-hand knowledge of their experience to service provision.

As well as providing work experience, volunteering gives refugees a feeling of belonging and the experience of working as part of a team. This is especially important for those who feel isolated and unsure of what they can contribute to the community. This year, three former volunteers have gained employment in Scottish Refugee Council and one has found a job with an external organisation.



“In Iraq I was a paramedic, but my qualifications are not recognised here. At present I am working as a carer, and improving my English. Eventually I hope to study for a medical or pharmaceutical qualification.”
Deyer - IRAQ

“I am grateful for the support I get from the government, but I don't want to be a burden on Scotland. As soon as my English is good enough I will get a job. I have always worked. It is a matter of pride for me to support myself.”
Ousmane - GUINEA

Providing a high quality service

Scottish Refugee Council is committed to offering the highest quality services to refugees and asylum seekers. Our advice service is accredited by the Office of the Immigration Services Commissioner (OISC), and we are currently working to ensure that the housing advice we provide meets the Scottish Executive's new Homepoint quality standards.

In recognition of our work, Scottish Refugee Council has been chosen by OISC as their sole training provider in Scotland. These courses are targeted at immigration advisers to ensure they meet high standards. Our training officer is also implementing a programme of courses for people working with refugees, targeted at public bodies, charities and voluntary groups. This year, staff from over 50 agencies took part in the training.

Thanks to our excellent track record in providing "move-on" services to refugees, the Home Office selected Scottish Refugee Council to lead a two-year Sunrise pilot project. Our Sunrise team provides one-to-one mentoring to help refugees deal with all the challenges of modern Scottish life, from getting a job to finding accommodation, accessing health care, or gaining new qualifications.

Our website has been completely redesigned to make it easier to use, and to increase the amount of information available. Website users can access regularly updated advice, translated into 8 languages, and a broad range of current information on refugee and asylum issues. The site at www.scottishrefugeecouncil.org.uk has had more than 14,000 visits per month; an increase of more than 30% a day, since its launch.

JobCentre

"I have good qualifications and had high hopes of getting a job as soon as I achieved refugee status, but at first I was unsuccessful. I worked as a volunteer with Scottish Refugee Council and joined their Media Group. This led to me being interviewed in the press about the difficulty of finding employment. Since then I have had three job offers and am about to start work. I have no doubt that my media work with Scottish Refugee Council led to these opportunities."

Mohammed Talal - SOMALIA

Growth and change

Whether paid employees or volunteers, people are Scottish Refugee Council's greatest resource. Developing their skills and experience is at the heart of our development strategy.

We are continuing to recruit people with a wide range of professional experience and to encourage staff to develop their knowledge through training, job shadowing and regular staff conferences.

Continuous changes in the external environment as well as political and media hostility towards asylum seekers continue to present us with huge challenges. We have reviewed our strategic plan, setting a new framework, direction and priorities for 2005-08.

We are continuing to develop our infrastructure so that we can respond quickly to the changing environment and needs of refugees. Scottish Refugee Council now has four teams: resources; services; development; policy and communications, working together to provide the best possible service.

Our relocation to single office premises in Glasgow is now complete. We offer services in Edinburgh, from the new Refugee Resource Centre on Shandwick Place and the Citizens Advice Bureau on Dundas Street.

Future challenges in the UK and Europe

Across Europe the debate about asylum and immigration is becoming increasingly mixed up with issues of security and terrorism. Public and political hostility to refugees is growing. The challenge for Scottish Refugee Council is to work at many levels within Scotland and Europe to ensure that refugees' rights are respected.

The harmonisation of European asylum systems is moving forward with the agreement in December 2005 of a common asylum procedures directive. The European Union is expending huge energy and resources securing its borders to prevent illegal migration, however, this is not matched by efforts to ensure that refugees are able to reach safety. Accessing asylum in Europe is becoming more difficult and dangerous and thousands of people are dying en route. Others risk being returned to face persecution because of inadequate asylum procedures.

Working as part of the European Council on Refugees and Exiles (ECRE) Scottish Refugee Council is fighting for the human rights of asylum seekers and refugees. We look forward in 2006 to hosting the biannual conference of ECRE which will bring together refugee assisting organisations from across Europe to lobby for a fair and effective asylum system in Europe.

With the help of our supporters, staff, volunteers and funders we will do our very best to assist both those refugees who arrive in Scotland now and those who sadly will need our protection in the future.



Sally Daghlian, Chief Executive

Scottish Refugee Council Summarised Financial Statements

Income and Expenditure and Statement of Financial Activities(SOFA)

for the Year Ended 31 March 2005

Incoming Resources	2005 £	2004 £
Incoming Resources from the operating activities of the charity:		
-Grants	2,365,517	2,158,105
-Charitable Trusts	42,510	180,432
Donations	19,017	14,313
Membership Fees	3,988	5,293
Emergency Accommodation	1,160,176	2,205,303
Bank Interest	61,736	36,723
Other Income	2,004	3,592
Total Incoming Resources	3,654,948	4,603,761
Resources Expended		
Fundraising Costs	7,461	26,461
Charitable Activities:		
-Emergency Accommodation	1,160,176	2,205,303
-Other activities in furtherance of the charity's objectives	2,223,140	1,920,608
Support Costs	146,589	144,584
Management & administration	4,322	3,854
Total Resources Expended	3,541,688	4,300,810
Net incoming resources before transfers	113,260	302,951
Transfer between funds	-	-
Surplus	113,260	302,951
Fund balances at 1 April 2004	913,924	610,973
Fund balances at 31 March 2005	1,027,184	913,924

Balance Sheet as at 31 March 2005

	2004 £	2003 £
Tangible Assets	14,798	39,008
Net Current Assets	1,012,386	874,916
Total Assets less current liabilities	1,027,184	913,924
Represented by:		
Funds		
General	726,457	646,919
Designated	201,200	151,200
Restricted	99,527	115,805
	1,027,184	913,924

Approved by the Directors on 25 August 2005 and signed on their behalf by David Walsh (Chair) and David Fraser (Director)

These summarised accounts are not the statutory accounts for Scottish Refugee Council but a summary of information relating to the Statement of Financial Activities and the Balance Sheet. The full financial statements from which this summary is derived have been audited by Chiene and Tait CA whose report is unqualified. Copies of the full accounts, the Report of the Directors and the Auditor's Report can be obtained from Scottish Refugee Council, 5 Cadogan Square, (170 Blythswood Court), Glasgow, G2 7PH.

Auditors Statement

The summarised accounts set out above are consistent with the audited financial statements of Scottish Refugee Council for the year ended 31 March 2005.

Cheine and Tait CA

Registered Auditor

Directors' Comments

The incoming resources in the year totalled £3,654,948 with an associated expenditure of £3,541,688 resulting in a surplus of £113,260 which equates to 3% of turnover.

Income for the year has decreased from £4,603,761 (2003/04) to £3,654,948 (2004/05), a decrease of £948,813 or 21%. This fall is due to a reduction in the use of Emergency Accommodation which generated income of £1,160,176 (2004/05) compared with £2,205,303 (2003/04). Emergency Accommodation is the direct cost of providing bed and breakfast accommodation for newly arrived asylum seekers, and is exactly matched with expenditure of £1,160,176 (2004/05) compared with £2,205,303 (2003/04). Emergency Accommodation is currently being run down and will be replaced by the Scottish Induction Service (SIS), which will be run jointly by Scottish Refugee Council and YMCA. YMCA will provide the accommodation for newly arrived asylum seekers and Scottish Refugee Council will provide specialist advice. Therefore it is projected that our income from Emergency Accommodation will continue to decline in 2005/06 and will have ceased prior to the beginning of the financial year 2006/07. As this is a direct cost, the reduction in turnover, whilst significant, will not affect the capacity to run our operations. Income, excluding Emergency Accommodation, has actually increased in the year by £96,314 which confirms that our programme of work has continued to grow and diversify.

Fundraising costs have been reduced from £26,461 (2003/04) to £7,461 (2004/05). The Directors consider it appropriate and in line with the Statement of Recommended Practice to include only those costs incurred in securing funds from Charitable Trusts. The decrease in fundraising costs is in line with charitable trust funds secured.

Core funding continues to be limited and we are pleased to note that the Home Office will be undertaking a review of core funding during 2005/06 with a proposed move to strategic funding in 2006/07.

The Directors have agreed that Scottish Refugee Council should aim to set aside sufficient funds in the general fund to cover six months running costs. The level of free reserves (those funds not tied up in fixed assets and designated and restricted funds) the charity will require to sustain its operations for a period of not less than six months, is £1,268,000 at March 2005. The actual free reserves at 31 March 2005 were £726,457, which is £541,543 short of the target figure. The Directors are addressing this shortfall and plan to work towards meeting the target over the next 5 years.

The Directors have continued to set aside funds in designated reserves to cover future developments and research into refugee needs, which will assist in developing services or preparing for changes in funding or legislation in such a volatile sector.

Board of directors

(During 2005)

David Walsh (Chair)
Hellen Matthews (vice Chair)
David Fraser
Mile Gazic
Kay Hampton (until June)
Sue Hounsell (until August)
Lewis Howitt
Lorraine Kariuki (until August)
Amadu Khan (until December)
Laurie Naumann
Okwiri Rabwoni (until August)
Judith Robertson (from September)
Edward G Smith
David Walker
Caroline Welsh (until February)

Patrons

Nelson Mandela
Lord McCluskey
Joyce McMillan

Funders

Big Lottery
Cash for Kids
Comic Relief
East Dunbartonshire Council
East Lothian Council
East Renfrewshire Council
Edinburgh Council
Equal
Falkirk Council
Fife Council
Glasgow City Council
Highland Council
Home Office
Lamb, Middleton & McGregor Bequest
Martin Connell Charitable Trust
Midlothian Council
Miss Margaret Boyd's Charitable Trust
North Ayrshire Council
North Lanarkshire Council
Oban Charitable Trust
Renfrewshire Council
RKT Harris Charitable Trust
Scottish Executive
South Ayrshire Council
South Lanarkshire Council
Thomas Sivewright Catto Charitable Trust
West Dunbartonshire Council
West Lothian Council

Scottish Refugee Council would like to thank its many funders, as well as our members, supporters and volunteers for their help and assistance. Without them our work would not be possible.

Scottish Refugee Council

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St George's West,
58 Shandwick Place
Edinburgh EH2 4RT

and

Citizens Advice Bureau
58 Dundas Street,
Edinburgh EH3 6QZ

Freephone number for
asylum seekers and refugees
0800 085 6087

E-mail

info@scottishrefugeecouncil.org.uk

Website

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