Who we are and what we do

Scottish Refugee Council is an independent human rights charity dedicated to supporting people who have fled horrific situations around the world. We believe in a Scotland in which all people seeking refugee protection are welcome and where people seeking sanctuary can live dignified and safe lives.

The individuals, families and children we work with are from countries where conflict is rife and human rights abuses are commonplace. We are proud to welcome and provide sanctuary to people fleeing conflict and persecution in countries like Syria, Eritrea, Sudan, and Afghanistan.

This year has seen an unprecedented urgency to provide protection to people fleeing war-torn Syria. We have repeatedly called on the UK Government to rise to the challenge created by this global humanitarian crisis and play an active role not just in alleviating the suffering of many thousands of people, but also to work collaboratively with other nations to seek sustainable solutions to this crisis.

In Scotland and across the UK we have seen an enormous outpouring of public goodwill and empathy towards refugees. We are proud to be part of a movement that recognises refugees as friends and neighbours in need of help. This year we have worked hard with partners and community groups across Scotland to spread the message #IWelcomeRefugees.

2015 has also been Scottish Refugee Council’s 30th anniversary year. For the last three decades we have welcomed and worked with people fleeing many different conflicts around the world. We hope that over the next 30 years our work can continue to help refugees rebuild their lives in safety in Scotland.

Our services this year have been busier than ever:

Our Family Keywork Service offers essential advice and support to asylum seeking families with young children as they try and navigate the asylum system and become accustomed to life in a new country.

Our Holistic Refugee Integration Service supports people recently granted refugee status in all aspects of their new lives, including housing, health, education and employment.

The Scottish Guardianship Service, delivered in partnership with Aberlour Child Care Trust, helps children and young people who arrive alone without their family through the asylum system.

We also run award-winning arts projects to promote better understanding between communities. This year Refugee Festival Scotland celebrated the many contributions refugees make to Scottish life and Scotland’s history of providing protection to people fleeing persecution and human rights abuses.

We campaign for policy change, raise awareness about issues that affect refugees and work hard to make sure refugee issues are represented in the media, in their communities and at a government level.

#IWelcomeRefugees
Sue Moody  
Chair of the Board

“My first year as Chair has been a real roller-coaster and a great privilege to work with so many dedicated people, staff, volunteers, board members, supporters and other groups campaigning and providing services for asylum seekers and refugees.

Celebrating thirty years was a great opportunity to say thank you to all those committed individuals, and to pledge ourselves to continue to deliver against every priority. The desperate situation faced by Syrians and others fleeing persecution spurs us on to do more.

As an organisation we had an even bigger and better Refugee Festival Scotland and reached some key milestones across Scottish Refugee Council projects. The Holistic Integration Service sailed through its second year and The Scottish Guardianship Service proved so successful that the need for a permanent service will be written into legislation. Our work with new MPs and with the media has ensured that Scottish Refugee Council is a major source of accurate information about asylum seekers and refugees in Scotland. Our evidence-based conclusions on what needs to be done have been welcomed right across the political spectrum.

We rose to the challenges presented by the global humanitarian crisis this summer. Over the year we have been eager to do as much as possible to help, and to focus on the #IWelcomeRefugees message. Ultimately refugees bring enormous benefits to this country and we need that resilience, determination and courage.”

Sue Moody, Chair of the Board

John Wilkes  
Chief Executive

“It is a privilege to report on another year of achievements for Scottish Refugee Council. This year had particular resonance as it was also our 30th anniversary, so we took the opportunity to celebrate but also to reflect on what remains to be done.

Sadly, our work continues to be necessary, particularly in a year set against a backdrop of one of the worst refugee crises in decades. Yet our vital services continued to support individuals at critical points in their asylum and refugee journey in Scotland. Our policy and advocacy work continued to argue for better outcomes. We worked with the Lord Advocate to produce guidance to ensure the Scottish criminal justice system respects the rights of refugees arriving here.

Our integration work continued to support refugees in their local communities across Scotland, with the ever successful annual Refugee Festival Scotland uniting communities.

As the humanitarian crisis escalated dramatically in September the UK Government response has been limited, with policies hardening for people seeking asylum in the UK. We are proud to have supported the Scottish Government and Local Authorities in their planning to receive Syrian refugees. We have been at the centre of a wave of public response, setting up the Scotland Welcomes Refugees website to inform and harness their offers of support.

Finally I give my thanks to staff and volunteers who work tirelessly every day to support refugees coming to Scotland.”

John Wilkes, Chief Executive
Sanaa, originally from Sudan and a mum of three, fled her home in Khartoum in 2005, following years of persecution by the authorities for her political beliefs.

“I was politically active in my country and experienced many problems after an Islamic fundamentalist regime took power in Sudan in 1989.

After Sharia law came in, I was investigated and harassed a number of times by the state because of my appearance and refusal to wear a hijab in public.

I remember one particular day when I was reported to the police by a man in the city centre while going for a bus. I was arrested on the bus in front of other people and taken to a Sharia court where I was ordered to sign a document stating I would never defy Sharia law again.

After this, life became almost unbearable. I left behind my husband, parents, brothers and sisters. It was extremely difficult.

In 2005, I left my country with my children.

When we arrived in the UK I asked for asylum, and my application for refugee protection was granted a few years later.

At first I lived in England, then we were told that the Home Office was moving us to Glasgow. I remember at the time someone I knew said, ‘Don’t worry about what you hear about Glasgow, it’s all just rumours.’

Communication was a problem at first because I found Scots people spoke differently to the English I’d been taught.

We have lived in the Southside of Glasgow since 2009, and my husband has since joined our family from Sudan.”

Sanaa now works full time for a Scottish charity that supports people living with HIV and Hepatitis C in Scotland.
“Before the war in Syria life was good. I graduated from Damascus University in my early twenties and worked as a dentist in the country’s capital. But the outbreak of civil war in Syria destroyed almost everything my family and I cherished.

I stayed in my country for as long as I could but had to leave after receiving a threat from the government. Someone called me and made a threat so I went to the airport and got on a plane.

At that time, my wife and children were living in Romania, having left Damascus a few years earlier for safety when the violence began escalating. Our family had been apart for three and a half years.

My search for safety ended in Scotland, where I received refugee status. Not long afterwards I was reunited with my family.

Today, our family is trying to build a new life here in Scotland. Adjusting to the culture of a new country isn’t easy, but my wife and I are extremely grateful that our children are safe with the chance of a brighter future.

I’ve only lived in Scotland for one year, so I am studying English language at college four days a week, as well as searching for a job. I’ve always enjoyed hard work and keeping busy. I want to be able to provide for my family and to be able to offer my children the same life chances that I was given by my parents growing up in Damascus.

Life is not easy and the Scottish weather is crazy but we are safe here and have hope for the future. Being safe is all that matters.”

Fadi
From Syria, arrived in Scotland in 2014
“When the war started, people who were black or of a different religion were targeted. In my family I have Catholics, Jews, Orthodox, Germans and Austrians. The soldiers burned houses in our street and killed many people.

Every night there was killing. You could not imagine what we witnessed.

I grabbed my two children and left our home. Being a refugee was terrifying as we never knew where it was safe to go, who we would meet or who might try to kill us. The children and I ended up on the border of Croatia.

We were very lucky. Some chap in a lorry saw us in the middle of nowhere. He knew we were Bosnian and he gave us a lift and we ended up in Split where the Red Cross was working. We registered ourselves as refugees there.

We didn’t have anything, no money, nothing. We had not washed for days.

We were taken to a reception centre along with other refugees and we were all later dispersed to British cities that welcomed refugees, including Glasgow. I was told I was going to Glasgow but I didn’t care where I was going. The most important thing for me was that my children were safe.

You can’t imagine how many of my family I lost. But my life is now in Scotland as I feel now that I’m Scottish.”

Now, more than 20 years later, Zada (pictured left) helps others who have come to Scotland from troubled parts of the world. She volunteers at a community centre in Glasgow where she supports others who have fled war, violence and persecution and left their homes far behind.
Our year in numbers

68 women participated in the Refugee Women’s Strategy Group’s launch of their organisation and elected 14 women representing 12 refugee-led organisations to their committee to highlight issues affecting women.

We have welcomed 75 volunteers to teams across the organisation throughout the year.

We held 11 volunteering information afternoons for asylum seekers and refugees who are looking for volunteering opportunities in organisations in Glasgow.

More than 3,200 people offered to support refugees in Scotland on www.scotlandwelcomesrefugees.scot

30 volunteer peer educators have been recruited to learn and share from each other’s experiences of life in Scotland.

Refugee Festival ran 110 events in 10 local authorities across Scotland, from Glasgow to the Isle of Skye in 57 venues.

8,700 people attended Refugee Festival events or participated in the festival.

26 volunteers supported Refugee Festival 2015, including 5 volunteer photographers who documented many of the events.

We worked with journalists from all sectors of the Scottish media to promote fair and accurate coverage of refugee issues. And we supported 30 refugees to tell their stories on film, TV, radio and print.

9,000 people followed our updates on Twitter, and over 6,500 liked our Facebook page. 90,000 people visited our website to keep up to date with information about refugees in Scotland.
These are our figures for the financial year ending March 2015

**Income**
- UKBA - Advice Services: £117,865
- Scottish Government – Strategic: £550,000
- Grants from other bodies: £791,856
- Charitable Trusts: £244,407
- Scottish Government – Projects: £578,665
- Investment & Other Income: £108,556
- Local Authorities: £28,910
- Donations & Memberships: £30,742

Total: £2,451,001

**Expenditure**
- Refugee and Asylum Services: £98,687
- Integration Support for Refugees: £1,631,349
- Research, Advocacy & Campaigning: £563,575
- Strategic Management & Governance: £106,276
- Cost of Raising Voluntary Income: £23,950

Total: £2,423,837

Scottish Refugee Council would like to thank its loyal supporters, including the many individuals and community groups who have given so much. We are very grateful to all our funders including:


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Thank you to all our board members:
Ms Sue Moody (Chair), Ms Liz Leonard (Vice Chair), Ms Dorothy Murray (Chair of finance and audit committee), Dr Katharine Jones (Director), Mr James Jopling (Director), Ms Janine Hunt (Chair of staffing committee), Mr Laurie Naumann (Director), Ms Muleya Mundemba (Director)
Scottish Refugee Council is an independent charity dedicated to providing advice and information to people who have fled horrific situations around the world.

We have been advocating and campaigning for the rights of refugees since 1985, and this year celebrated our 30th anniversary.

Support us:
Donate: Text RFGE31 £10 to 70070 to donate to Scottish Refugee Council and make a difference today.

Go to www.scottishrefugeecouncil.org.uk/support_us/ways_toDonate

Fundraise: If you can help with fundraising please contact kirsty.white@scottishrefugeecouncil.org.uk or call 0141 223 7921

To find out more, sign up to our e-newsletter by visiting our website: www.scottishrefugeecouncil.org.uk

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