

Report from the Management Committee to the Annual General Meeting of the Friends of the Drop-In for Asylum Seekers and Refugees: 23rd August 2017



Committee

Since our last AGM Jane, Etor, Salah and Dawda have left the committee. We thank them very much for their work over many years. We are pleased to have been joined by Tolosa and Kathleen. I should like to thank all the committee for their hard work over the year. Without them the Drop-In and other activities would not have taken place.

Over the first full year in which she has worked for us, Sandra has got to know our members well. She has strengthened our links with other organisations working in partnership with us. She has helped us to expand our activities, including many successful funding bids. She has also increased our volunteer numbers.

Activities since the last AGM

The Drop-In is the core of our activities, as our name suggests. This is run 50 weeks of the year by our dedicated volunteers Kojoe, Mohammed, Salah, Dawda, Jordan, Genet and Farida.

Again, this year, in the winter months, Reda cooked hot, vegan and halal food, for which we thank him very much.

Tolosa looks after the front desk and computers.

Access to service providers is vital and we are grateful for our partners' continued support.

At Christmas the Drop-In hosted a well-attended party with halal food and gifts from Santa. The party was entertained by Flash the Magician, who also did brilliant balloons. It was very lively and enjoyed by all ages.

Student Volunteers

A number of University students have worked with FODI on their research. A successful model was journalism student Jordan who became a volunteer and used his experience to inform his articles for his final dissertation.

A Volunteer Training and Induction Package

has been produced and implemented. Volunteers continue to be half from the local community and half asylum seekers and refugees.

Women's Group

Started in September at the Hudson Road School children's centre funded for 30 weeks by the women's fund of the Community Foundation, run by Sandra and very able and dedicated volunteers, Angela, Fanny and Kushnoma. Free projects have included ceramics delivered by MBC Ceramics at the glass centre and funded by Family, Adult and Community Learning. A crèche was obtained in the new year. SCC beauty students invited the women to the college for

beauty treatments which was greatly appreciated. After Easter the group moved to Trinity Church, whose large hall was excellent for Zumba. The women have developed strong bonds with each other and offer mutual support. They have also planned and delivered sessions for the group, including cooking and sewing. A successful bid to Cultural Spring has enable HIVE radio to deliver a project involving sharing their cultural heritage through dance, poetry and stories. This will culminate in a celebration event in September and a broadcast.

Partnerships

Action Housing now house 16 people who have been given their status in Sunderland. Also, four destitute members are now housed in Washington and receive support from FODI and from Action Foundation.

Action Language classes, including ESOL have been running all year.

Chris Howson, at the University, provides conversation classes on Fridays during term time.

Sunderland College's Park Lane Campus continues to give us support. Barbering students with their tutor, Mark Sowerby make visits to the Drop-In to give FODI members free haircuts.

Sport

In partnership with Sunderland Aquatic Centre, we register people for Everyone Active cards. We have bought FODI gym and swim vouchers which we give out to members. This is very popular and very beneficial to our members. The Aquatic Centre has also given us free family activity vouchers and arranged a free swimming day for all FODI members during refugee week. Sports session at Cityspace continue to run on Mondays.

Twenty tickets for each home match were very kindly donated by **SAFC** and given out to our members. This has enabled many members to enjoy live football over the season.

Cycling

FODI has provided 23 donated bicycles, to adults and children. Before being given out, they are safety checked by our volunteer, Guy, who also helps with minor repairs later, 8 done so far. A Gentoo Aspire grant has helped us to cover the cost of equipment and small parts for repairs. Of course, we could use more bikes. If anyone would like to donate a bicycle, either adult's or child's, please contact us at fodi.sunderland@outlook.com.

Football

FODI has obtained funding from Comic Relief for 30 football coaching sessions run by Young Asian Voices (YAV) for our members, which have been very much enjoyed and really well attended.

Trips Out

Sandra took her summer English class to Newcastle in September for a history/cultural tour to the Castle Keep, Bessie Surtees house, Baltic and the Sage.

In November a group very much enjoyed going bowling.

In the February half term the Women's group and families had a wonderful day out in Newcastle, visiting the Discovery Museum followed by a walkabout the city, looking at the Castle Keep, the many bridges, the Baltic and the Sage. Everyone was thrilled at such a day out. This was made possible by the generous donation of one individual to whom we are extremely grateful.

In June Jim and Jane took a group to Safetyworks training centre in Newcastle. Lots of useful information was given and translated into Farsi and Arabic. Afterwards the group explored Newcastle together.

Summer Playscheme

Again in the summer holidays, we have joined with CEED (Community Environmental Educational Development) to enjoy fun activities in Roker park for our families and others from the area, sponsored by Northumbrian Water and the Woodward Charitable trust.

The URC church Roker has also made spaces available for refugee children on their own playscheme.

FODI Big Picnic is planned for South Shields in August.

Film

FODI has paid for several people to see films at the Sunderland Empire Cinema on their cut price Tuesdays offer. This proved popular. FODI members also had the chance to see free films on Fridays at the Sunderland University cinema, organised by Chris Howson, the University Chaplain after his English class.

Peace Project at the Glass Centre

FODI joined the Essence project for dementia clients, and Assist for veterans to look at the meaning of Peace. This was hosted by the Glass centre and delivered by the glass artist Carrie Fertig. Each participant produced an e-book of their work and contributions and both participants and facilitators found this a very moving experience.

Our members say how much all the sporting and social activities help them to feel better, mentally and physically.

FODI IT Our website enables many people, including organisations to whom we apply for funding, to find out more about us and our activities.

Our newsletter has been updated to a new electronic format. Our laptops are used by our members on a weekly basis at the Drop-In. Let us know if you have anything you wish to put on Facebook or be included in our next Newsletter or if you wish to receive a copy.

How to keep safe in Sunderland talks have been given by the police to our members in separate language groups using our volunteer interpreters. Awards for All gave a grant for leaflets, covering the subject matter of the talks, to be produced in Farsi, Arabic and Kurdish under their education and crime prevention budget. It has been translated into Oromo by one of our volunteers and we are hoping for Tigrinya and Amharic to be done soon. G4S are now distributing this important information to new arrivals in the City.

Interpreting project

We are seeking to develop a project in which people who are willing to use their language skills help others who speak their language, by helping to translate for them. As you can see from this report, this vital to many of our members. Eileen has produced vocabulary sheets to help volunteers on going to the doctor's, the police station, housing etc.

If you may be able to help with this, please talk to Sandra.

Move On

A number of our volunteers work tirelessly to assist those who have gained status to go through the difficult transition process and settle here in Sunderland, or move on to other cities where they go to join relatives, friends or to look for work.

We refer clients who have been given leave to remain to the ICOS Workwise programme to assist them into future work and training.

Welcome and Orientation Project

Funding from New Beginnings has enabled the development of this project for new arrivals which aims to help them find their way in Sunderland, learn about the services they need to access and integrate with the wider community. A welcome and orientation pack giving information about FODI, other support organisations and local activities, is being produced. Sandra has recruited and trained some very dedicated volunteers, Pam, Jason, Shaun, Reda to deliver this service.

Community Links

In order to facilitate links with the community, we have partnered with the URC Roker church who are offering a drop in for asylum seekers and refugees to their IT suite and social space on a Thursday.

We have been invited to speak to many organisations during the year

In October Jane and Pav talked at Redhouse Academy assemblies and showed his video of asylum seekers' views of their welcome to Sunderland. We hope to co-operate more with Redhouse in the future.

FODI member Abraham spoke at the opening of the Journey to Justice exhibition at the Museum.

Felicity spoke about FODI at a fundraising event of Peace, Love and Unity and we are very grateful for the donations.

In February Dorothy and Jane gave a presentation on asylum seekers and refugees to 39 staff and some students of Sunderland College as part of their staff training day on equality and diversity. We hope our input will help the college staff in their dealings with refugees and asylum seekers and to understand some of the challenges they face. A talk was also given to the barbering students to give them some background about the people they were coming to help.

Also in February, FODI members spoke to Level 2 students of History and Politics at the University of Sunderland. They prepared and gave a dramatic presentation on the situation of asylum seekers in the UK. They also presented "People like us" an exhibition of photographs and text created by Crossings, and took part in two question and answer sessions with students.

Tolosa spoke at the Wearside Amnesty International Group Human Rights Day at the Minster about his work as a FODI volunteer and interpreter, and the situation in his country, Ethiopia. He lit the Amnesty candle with Julie Elliott MP. Other FODI members also took part.

Nisha from BBC Look North spent time interviewing Tolosa and produced a piece for the Look North Facebook page.

Dorothy, Zeinab, Ziad and Mohammed attended a Quaker area meeting with the theme "Fighting for Peace". Ziad and Mohammed, both from Syria, spoke of their experiences of war and their journeys to Sunderland. Our thanks to Zeinab for translating for them.

Sandra spoke to the Health Net meeting in June about the work of FODI and they responded very sympathetically to the position of asylum seekers and are now supporting us with clothes and equipment for clients. After meeting at the multi cultural celebration, Sandra spoke in August to the Seaburn Rotarians with Tolosa and Dr Sakhi. The Rotary club was very interested in our work and wish to support us in the future.

At all these events many questions were asked and feedback was very positive. We are grateful to the individuals and organisations who gave us these opportunities.

"We are Global Sunderland" on Spark Radio gave us another way to make our voice heard. Lots of our members were involved in making two programmes, now available as podcasts. Huge thanks to lecturers Jay and Caroline, to Spark radio students and to Ram from YAV.

Achievements

We should like to congratulate Mubarak, Reda and Salah on achieving their Entry Level 3 qualification in Skills for Sport and Active Leisure at a course run by Green Sky Fitness.

Congratulations to Kojoe and Jane who both received awards for individual contributions to the BME community from SBMEN.

We are also proud that FODI won the award for best BME Voluntary Organisation in Sunderland.

Refugee Week in June

Was felt to be a great success by both organisers and participants. Its core message was "different pasts, shared future".

Sandra co-ordinated the contributions of our partner organisations to put out a comprehensive timetable of events starting with City of Sanctuary's traditional walk by brave people on a very hot day.

CoS and FODI also organised a most successful litter picking and weeding day in Roker Park in conjunction with CEED.

An excellent display of people's journeys to the UK was produced by some of our volunteers. It provided a talking point at events throughout the week, including "Tea with a Refugee" hosted by SCC and Gentoo, talks given in secondary schools together with YAV and at "Refugees got Talent" at the Drop-In, led by Fightback. Everyone enjoyed and admired the talents shown by both adults and children.

The women's group joined with a local community group for a Zumba session, after Ramadan. Also after Eid a wonderful, celebratory party was held at Bede Tower jointly organised by YAV and FODI.

This wide range of activities facilitated genuine interaction between asylum seekers and members of the public who had not previously met them.

FODI office

Thanks to Bizspace, FODI continues to have the use of an office in Bridge House. This enables us to hold meetings, host ESOL classes, run training sessions and social events, including coffee mornings for our volunteers.

There is a great deal of movement as members move away and new asylum seekers are being sent to Sunderland. There are around 300 asylum seekers currently in Sunderland.

We have welcomed 15 new volunteers this year and we are grateful to all of them for their time and support.

On behalf of the Committee, I wish to express our very sincere thanks to all the individuals and organisations who have helped us this last year, whether as

volunteers, attendees at the Drop-In, or donors of gifts or money, especially our main funders, the Clinical Commissioning Group, the Lloyds Bank Foundation, the Allen Lane Foundation, Sir James Knott Foundation, Comic Relief, Gentoo, Sunderland City Council, Awards for All, Cultural Spring, the Jill Franklin Trust and the Community Foundation without whom FODI would not exist.

I hope that we shall have your continued support going forward.

Future Projects include: Further work with SPARK radio to train Refugee presenters for a regular programme, work with Sangini on art projects for women, SBME network presentations during Black History month and Basic First aid training for Clients, delivered by the Red Cross.

Challenges

The new committee has strengths to build on but many challenges to face including

- how to meet all the needs people have, in the face of growing numbers of clients and the reduced availability of other support services,
- uncertainty about future funding, which we are working hard to find.
- the turnover of volunteers.

FODI Committee members 2016/17

Dorothy Ismail, Felicity Livsey, Kojoe Otoo, Zeinab Cummings, Tolosa Tadesse, Kathleen Hines, Jane Nikolarakis, Etor Quaysie, Salah Aljafayri, and Dawda Sarjo.

