



Registered Charity No. 1176524

Report from the Management Committee to the Annual General Meeting of the Friends of the Drop-In for Asylum Seekers and Refugees: 22nd August 2018

Committee

Since the AGM, August 2017, we are pleased that Jane, Stephen and Zara have joined the committee. Dorothy decided to leave the committee at Christmas and we would like to officially thank her for her hard work as a volunteer, treasurer and committee member for FODI over many years. I should also like to thank all the committee for their excellent work over the past year. Without them and all the other volunteers, whether at the Drop-in, the Women's group, welcoming new asylum seekers, helping with families or any of the other tasks, the Drop-In and other activities could not have taken place.

Sandra has now worked for FODI for over two years as our Project Development Worker (PDW) and we are amazed and grateful for the constant hard work she undertakes on behalf of our members whilst strengthening links with other organisations working in partnership with us. Sandra has helped us to expand our activities, including 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, Musaab and Abdullah, who run the kitchen very efficiently along with other members who help with tidying the hall.

In the winter months, Felicity and the kitchen team cooked hot, vegan and halal food, for which we thank them very much.

Tolosa has looked after the front desk and computers. He also acts as an interpreter both at the Drop-in and on outside occasions when we are promoting FODI. Stephen works on the front desk keeping an eye on the Pool table players and helping with outings for the men.

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 again by a Magician. Zeinab worked wonders with the present buying for around 70 children, adeptly fitting the right gift to the right child. The afternoon was enjoyed by all ages.

A Volunteer Training and Induction Package

This is carried out by Sandra to familiarize volunteers with FODI policies and procedures. Volunteers continue to be half from the local community and half asylum seekers and refugees.

Women's Group

It is now well over a year since the Women's Group commenced. It is currently funded by the Hadrian Trust, the Hospital of God at Greatham and the Linden Family Fund at the Community Foundation and run by Sandra, Angela, Kushnoma, Hannah and Claudia at Trinity Church, Stockton Road. There is a creche at the Women's Group allowing more mothers to attend and enjoy the activities and sociability whilst their children are cared for.

This year the Women's Group was the subject of a video about their artwork on identity with Cultural spring and Sangini, commissioned by Counterpoint Arts. They made self-portraits, group artworks and their own books of memory. They had a FACL funded batik course delivered by MBC ceramics.

The women have also enjoyed Zumba and dance sessions.

Partnerships

We continue to refer single men who have been given their status to Action Foundation, who have three houses in Sunderland. Also, four destitute members are 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 tutors, Mark Sowerby and Sharon Smith make visits to the Drop-In to give FODI members free haircuts which is greatly appreciated.

Our volunteers and members are always pleased when partners visit the Drop-in.

Sport

In partnership with Sunderland Aquatic Centre, we register people for Everyone Active cards. We have bought, with funding, gym and swim vouchers, 1,600. These we give out, one per week, to members presenting their Everyone Active card. This is very popular and of great benefit to our members. The Aquatic Centre has also given us free family activity vouchers and two annual subscriptions which were given to two of our destitute members. Sports sessions at Cityspace continue to run on Tuesdays 2-4pm

Ten 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 18 donated bicycles, to adults and children. Before being given out, they are safety checked by our bike volunteers, Guy and Othman. Guy handed over to Othman earlier in the year, and in their support of all those with bikes, they did over 50 repairs in the last year. Othman has now been joined by Roland a new volunteer to 'team bike'. After the GENTOO ASPIRE grant finished, FODI has covered 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 completed the Comic Relief funded 30 football coaching sessions run by Young Asian Voices (YAV) for our members, which have been very much enjoyed and very well attended. We extended the football sessions in partnership with YAV up until the end of 2017.

Trips Out

In October, the families (45 people in total) had a day out at the Great North museum enjoying a wealth of historical artefacts, natural history, a visit to the planetarium and a special exhibition on Martin Luther King as part of Freedom City.

We also took over 50 people, single men and women and families to the Sunderland illuminations which we really enjoyed and had conversations about the history of such events.

At Easter, we took the families to the Life centre in Newcastle which was a very busy and rewarding day. Enthusiastic children and their parents enjoyed science workshops on chocolate, a 4D ride, as well as an animatronic dinosaur exhibition.

In May, Jane, Stephen Zeinab and Sandra took twelve of our members on a field trip to Keswick in the Lake District for three days. This gave our members an introduction to the area and a friendly relationship was set up with Friends of the Lake District who have since visited one of our Drop-in sessions. We thank Jane for suggesting and organising this trip.

Stephen organised an outing to Laser Quest for 14 clients, which FODI funded. This will continue, and we would like to thank Stephen for his work on this and other projects with our young male clients.

Summer Playschemes

This summer we once again are working in partnership with Roker United Reformed Church who are offering free summer activities for children aged 5 to 11, Tuesdays and Thursdays. Roker URC have been committed throughout the last year to include asylum seekers and refugees in all their projects. CEED are also holding gardening sessions at Roker URC for children over 11 years and some family days.

There are Family days at Bede Tower each Wednesday in August 12 – 3pm for primary age children. There is a free Summer Special for children 0 – 11 with Sunderland Minster. We have been working with Everyone Active to provide free Zumba classes for women on Friday lunchtimes with childcare available, funded by local area funding pots. After starting at Pallion Action group, the classes are at Bede Campus during the summer holidays.

FODI Big Picnic was held at South Shields in August 17. It was a great success thanks to Jane's planning and everyone who helped. We all enjoyed races, ball games, bubbles as well as the miniature train and ice cream. Most of all it was fun and relaxing for people to chat with each other.

Film

FODI members 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.

Projects at the Glass Centre

Some of those FODI members who took part in the Glass Centre 'Peace' Project last year have taken part in a new project on 'Forgiveness' with the same artist Carrie Fertig. Her exhibition opens in September at the glass centre.

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 latest newsletter is being brought together. Our laptops are used by 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. FODI used an Awards for All grant to translate the Police Safety talks into Farsi, Arabic, and Kurdish. It has been translated into Oromo by one of our volunteers and we are hoping for French and Amharic to be done soon. G4S are now distributing this important information to new arrivals in the City.

Interpreting

FODI uses a number of our volunteers as interpreters who use their language skills to help others. Our mainstays in this are Zeinab, Jane, Sakhi, Tolosa, Ash, Sarhad, Argentine and Ruzan. As you can see from this report, this is vital to many of our members. We also take people from the level 2 interpreting course at the college on placement.

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

Move On

Several 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 Community Foundation 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 translated. Sandra has recruited and trained some very dedicated volunteers, Pam, Halima and our volunteer interpreters to deliver this service. Families are greeted by the volunteers who also assist with GP registration and getting children into local schools. This year we have been able to help fund the necessary school uniform by way of funding from Seedbed.

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

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 about asylum seekers in the UK. They also took part in and answer sessions with students.

College and Schools

Steve, Tolosa and Perse spoke to students at Bede 6th form college and did a refugee awareness session. We also took part in Sunderland College's Equality and Diversity event.

Steve, Tolosa, Perse and Zara have also visited a number of primary and secondary schools in the area during the last year and had a very warm welcome. The children responded very well to stories of asylum seekers and engaged in good questions and answers on how people found themselves here in Sunderland. FODI would like to thank all staff and pupils from these schools and we look forward to working with other schools in the future.

Health Talks

Dr. Sakhi (a client) and our PDW met the practice manager and health assessment nurse of the Hylton Medical Group. They were extremely supportive and wish to work closely with us to assist their many patients from the asylum seeking and refugee communities.

Our PDW, two workers from the Healthy Steps programme from the Sunderland Black and Minority Ethnic network and two client volunteers went to St Benedict's Hospice as part of a training day for new trainee palliative care doctors.

FODI and City of Sanctuary met up in January with new GPs from the Sunderland area on a training scheme to share information on services available for asylum seekers and the difficulties they face.

Mental Health

A small group of volunteers have been assisted with better understanding the needs of our clients regarding their mental health through some training and advice from Dr Iain Cameron (retired Consultant psychiatrist) and Dr De Silva (Consultant Psychiatrist in Sunderland) given in a voluntary capacity to FODI. We thank them for this invaluable insight.

GLOBAL SUNDERLAND on SPARK radio

Using a grant from Cultural Spring, FODI once again worked with SPARK radio to have a number of training workshops on radio production. This was a successful collaboration with Caroline Mitchell and Jay Sykes from the University of Sunderland. There was much enthusiasm for radio and as a result of this project, Ash now helps to present a weekly programme with other students from Spark on the cinema.

The original programmes made with the GLOBAL SUNDERLAND title were shortlisted for a CRA Community Radio Award and Tolosa attended the event in Bristol.

Refugee Week in June

Once again refugee week events were felt to be a success by both organisers and participants. The core message this year was "Twenty Simple Acts" to represent 20 Years of Refugee Week.

Sandra coordinated contributions with our partner organisations to put out a timetable of events during the week, including: 20 20 cricket FODI vs YAV team, Walk Of Sanctuary, Tea with a refugee at Gentoo Washington, Sunderland Customer Service Centre and Back on the Map, Refugees got talent hosted by Bede Tower and organised by Fightback, Bellydance party at the Women's group, ICOS family CLEAN-UP DAY IN BACKHOUSE PARK and a final celebration in partnership with YAV and Sunderland BME network at the Bangladesh centre. We wish to thank all who performed in "Refugees got Talent", all partners who organized and sponsored events and Meharite and Eyorusalem for the fine Eritrean food they cooked for our final celebration.

General Events

FODI clients also took part in and attended many local events during the year including 2021 Sunderland bid, Black History Month, Sikh celebrations, International women's day, volunteering in Roker park and performing at the Tall Ships event. These were with the partners of Sunderland Council, Sunderland BME network and CEED.

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.

This year we had an evening meal for FODI volunteers at Efes restaurant. There were 23 volunteers present and a good evening was enjoyed by all.

There is a great deal of movement as members move away and new asylum seekers are sent to Sunderland. There are around 350 asylum seekers currently in Sunderland.

We have welcomed 13 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, Sunderland City Council, Sir James Knott Foundation, Community Foundation New Beginnings and Women's Fund, Awards for All, the Hospital of God at Greatham, the Hadrian Trust, Cultural Spring, the Linden Family Fund and Seedbed, without whom FODI would not exist. I hope that we shall have your continued support going forward.

Challenges

- The committee has strengths to build on but many challenges to face including:
- Meeting the needs of all our clients with regard to their mental health
- Working with more local partners to find ways for those with status to find work and employment in Sunderland
- 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 2018

Zeinab Cummings, Abraham Eiluorior, Kathleen Hines, Felicity Livsey, Stephen Newman, Jane Nikolarakis, Kojoe Otoo, Tolosa Tadesse, Zara Juma.