

Haringey Migrant Support Centre

Annual Report 2014-2015



Welcome from the Chair of Trustees

Haringey Migrant Support Centre is now in its third year of providing a weekly drop-in service to migrants, refugees and asylum seekers. We are thankful to Fr Joe, the parish priest of St John Vianney Hall, for the use of the parish facilities for our activities. Although we are encouraged that we are doing something 'right', it is with sadness that annually we experience an increase in the number of visitors each week.

As a regular volunteer at the drop-in, I can only say how impressed and proud I am of the service we provide. And I would like to take this opportunity to offer some thanks for the past year:

Firstly, the drop-in would not function without the commitment and hard work of our two part-time staff, Karolina, the coordinator, and Anna, the assistant coordinator. They ensure that around thirty volunteers are present at the centre each week – volunteers who talk with the visitors, give them information and help on a wide range of issues and refer them when appropriate to our dedicated sessional Welfare Rights Adviser and pro bono immigration adviser who also attend the drop-in; volunteers - many of whom are former visitors - who prepare a tasty nutritious two-course meal for over 50 people every week; those who play with the children accompanying their parents; and those who help with the distribution of dried food and clothes. And there are many other volunteers who play a role 'behind the scenes' - helping us raise money; keeping our IT and database functioning; collecting donated food and clothes; etc.

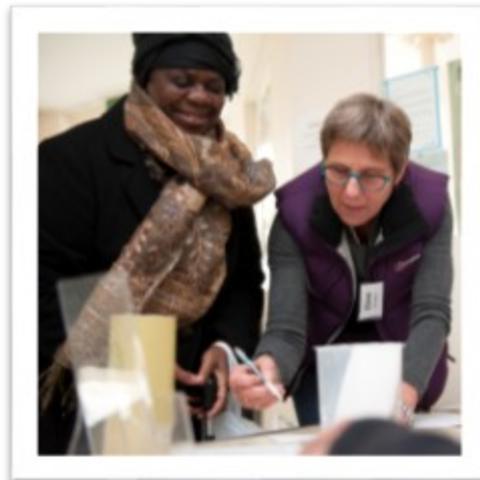
Secondly, I want to thank the drop-in visitors. Some - on the recommendation of other visitors and professionals - travel for many hours to seek our help. Not only do they wait for the doors to open, they patiently wait a little longer in the hall before a volunteer is free to talk with them. Despite the personal tragedy and hardship that many of them are facing, they contribute to the positive atmosphere of the centre.

Finally, I would like to thank my fellow trustees who take time out of their busy schedules to ensure that the organisation fulfils its legal obligations.

And looking forward to next year? Our experience suggests that the demands on the drop-in will grow. The cuts in Legal Aid continue to strip away at the few legal defences that many migrants had to fight the sometimes arbitrary judgements of the Home Office: even those fortunate enough to have some income can rarely afford to pay a solicitor privately. And we are witnessing new challenges. Take, for example, the housing crisis which affects migrants especially hard. We are finding that local authorities are more and more repudiating their duties to provide people who find themselves homeless with emergency accommodation. For example, families (often lone mothers) are being turned away by Social Services despite this breaking the provisions of Section 17 of the Children Act: we know of children who have to sleep on night buses or in police stations as they have nowhere else to go. The night shelters are full and the number of migrants who are sleeping rough with nowhere to go for a shower is increasing. I could go on.

So thank you once again to all those who support our efforts at HMSC to do something about the situation facing migrants in London.

Clare Croft-White, Chair of Trustees



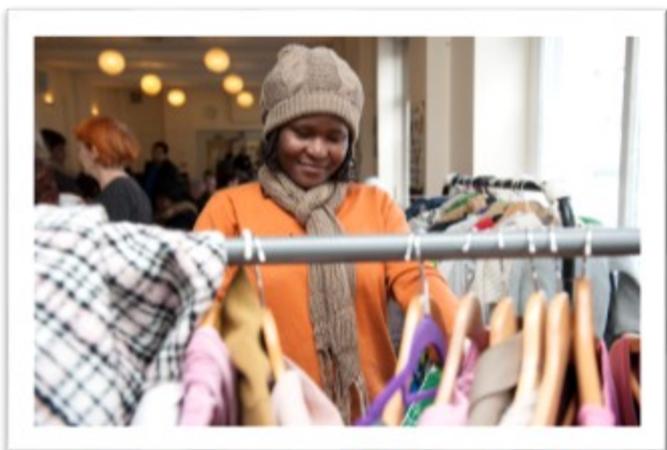
Chair of Trustees and weekly drop-in volunteer Clare Croft-White with one of our visitors.

Our work in 2014-2015

Legal and welfare advice and signposting



Food and clothes banks



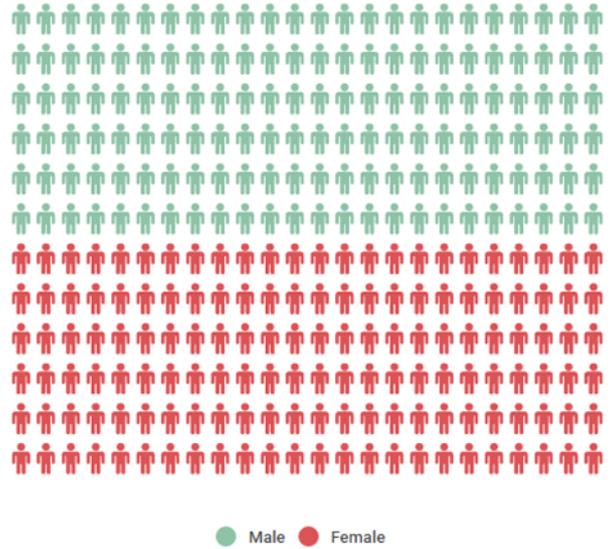
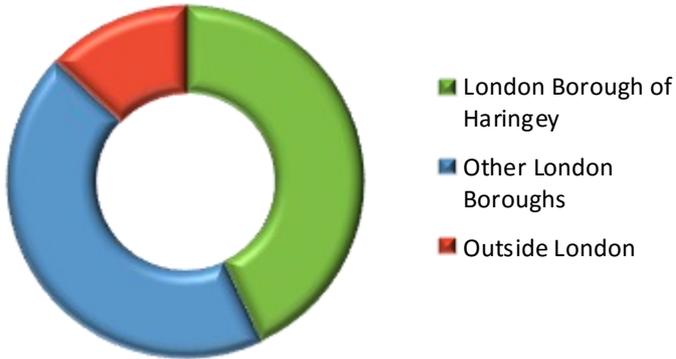
A weekly hot meal



Our work in 2014-2015

The Drop-in Centre welcomed visitors from 84 different countries. The gender split of visitors was around 50:50. 43% of all visitors had an address in the London borough of Haringey, 44% came from other London boroughs, and 13% gave an address outside London.

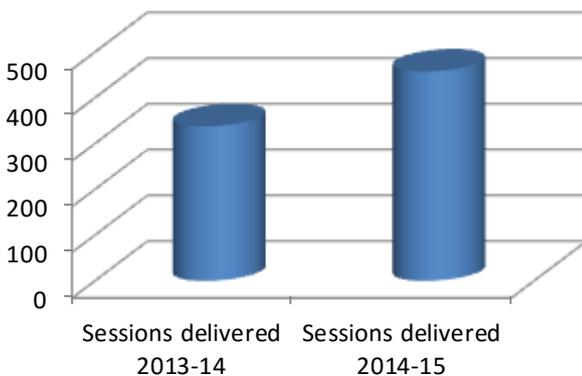
Addresses of HMSC visitors



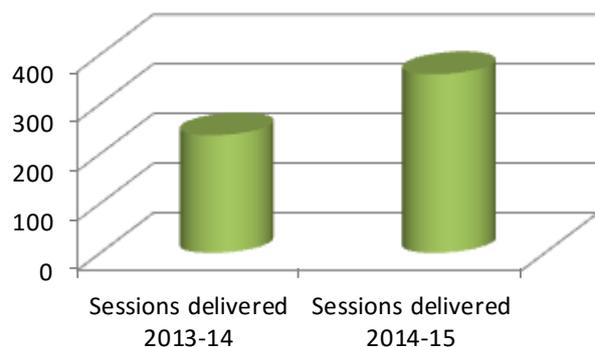
Asylum seekers, refugees or people with no access to public funds made up 40% of our visitors. 142 visitors (28%) were homeless or had no home of their own and 69 (15%) were destitute.



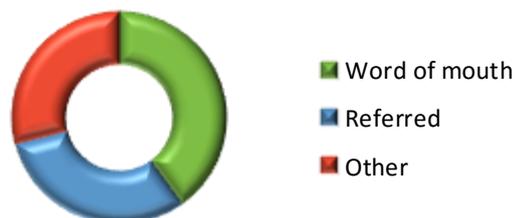
In 2014/15, we delivered 458 individual immigration advice sessions over the year; this compared with 338 sessions in the previous year



In 2014/15, 360 individual welfare rights sessions were delivered; this compared with 237 in the previous year.



From our recorded data, 40% heard of the Drop-in Centre through word of mouth and a further 31% were referred by other agencies including the CAB, the local council, the local MP and law centres



Our supporters in 2014-2015

In 2014-2015, we received fantastic support from a host of dedicated runners, walkers, swimmers and cyclists. Our former Chair of trustees, Lauren Cape-Davenhill took on an amazing challenge in aid of Haringey Migrant Support Centre, raising an immense £4,636 towards our work. We spoke to her to find out more about her epic bike ride.



Can you tell us a little bit about what your challenge involved?

My challenge was cycling solo from Brighton (UK) to Beirut (Lebanon). The trip took 18 weeks, and I passed through 14 countries and covered about 5600km in total.

Can you please tell us why you decided to take on this challenge?

I decided to take on this challenge because I love cycling, and for several years have wanted to travel from the UK to a different continent by bike. Bike touring is a lovely way to travel: you feel connected to the landscape and have time to notice things on the road, and interact with people along the way. I met a French guy in Syria a few years ago who had cycled to Syria from France, and I thought 'I want to do that!' So I suppose he was my inspiration. I have been studying Arabic for a while and was keen to move to Lebanon to spend a year there improving my language skills. So I thought I'd combine the bike trip idea with the living-in-Lebanon idea, and move to Lebanon by bike!

And why did you choose to support HMSC?

HMSC is a charity very close to my heart. In a political climate hostile to migrants, and with cuts to legal aid and state services, HMSC provides invaluable support to migrants - many of whom are destitute, desperate and cannot access support anywhere else. I especially like the fact that HMSC is open to all migrants, regardless of immigration status - it is an inclusive, friendly and safe space and the atmosphere at the drop-in is lovely. I have seen first hand the positive impact HMSC support has had for many visitors - in some cases, the high quality advice and dedicated support from HMSC staff and volunteers has literally changed people's lives. As HMSC does not receive government funding and relies purely on grants and individual fundraising, I really wanted to support HMSC with my bike trip. I know that every penny I have raised will be well-spent continuing the vital work of the centre.

Our supporters in 2014-2015

What was the highlight of your trip?

It's hard to decide! Can I have three highlights?! Cycling the mountain road from Mostar to Sarajevo in Bosnia was breath-taking. The road goes through a gorge up the River Neretva, with mountains rising up each side, and is probably the most beautiful place I have ever been. Plus the food in Bosnia is great, much needed after a long day's cycling. Plitvice Lakes in Croatia was a bit like paradise, magical waterfalls and turquoise lakes. And I also had a wonderful time in Tirana, the capital of Albania, being hosted by friends of Indira from HMSC's advice team. I got a personal guided tour of Tirana and was whisked off for a night out on the town, a real treat after three months wild camping. Albanians are wonderfully hospitable people and I was grateful to be so well looked after.

Were there any difficult moments?

I mostly had a great time, but of course there were some difficult bits. The weather was awful in Montenegro and the road I was on kept going through pitch black 1.5km tunnels through the mountains, which is kind of terrifying when you're being overtaken by huge trucks. I also got questioned by the police in Turkey who thought I was cycling to Syria to join the conflict, which was fairly surreal.

What kept you motivated to carry on?

The route I cycled, through Europe to Turkey and then Lebanon, was essentially the same route (in reverse) that many refugees take to reach the UK - especially those fleeing the conflict in Syria. My trip coincided with Europe's 'refugee crisis' - I cycled through Germany, Austria, Hungary, Croatia, Greece and South Turkey, countries where many thousands of Syrians are seeking sanctuary. I was very aware that the difficulties I faced during my trip were nothing compared to the hardships of those people taking the same route as me in the opposite direction, trying to reach Europe and find safety. Even if I was tired and wet and cold, I had a tent and a warm sleeping bag, and I could treat myself to the occasional meal in a restaurant or night in a hostel. Refugees in Europe, including families and children, often have none of these luxuries. So even when it was difficult I was aware how lucky I was, and was motivated to carry on cycling to raise money for HMSC so that some of the refugees reaching the UK will be able to access desperately needed advice and support.

Would you do it again?

I would do the trip again in a heartbeat - it was the best experience I've ever had. I'm hoping to take the boat back to Turkey next year and carry on cycling where I left off, through Turkey and Central Asia all the way to Kyrgyzstan. And of course if I do this I'll use the trip to fundraise for HMSC! I'll make sure I keep you posted.



Thank you!

In 2014-2015, we also received essential support from a number of trusts and foundations. Their support was fundamental to our ability to continue our important work.

A huge thank you to the following for making our work possible:

Comic Relief



London Legal Support Trust



Trust for London



The National Lottery Awards for All



LOTTERY FUNDED

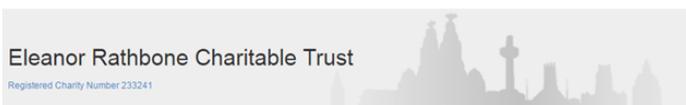
The Hilden Charitable Fund

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The Pret Foundation Trust



Eleanor Rathbone



Hornsey Parochial Charities



Another huge thank you to those funders who have provided hardship grants to visitors, making their lives better in times of need:

Al-Mizan Charitable Trust

Catholic Women's League & Clothing Guild

Fund for Human Need

Heinz, Anna and Carol Kroch Foundation

London Churches Refugee Fund

National Zakat Foundation

Newington Green Unitarians

Sheila Hind Trust

The Mary Strand Trust

The Society of Friends of Foreigners in Distress

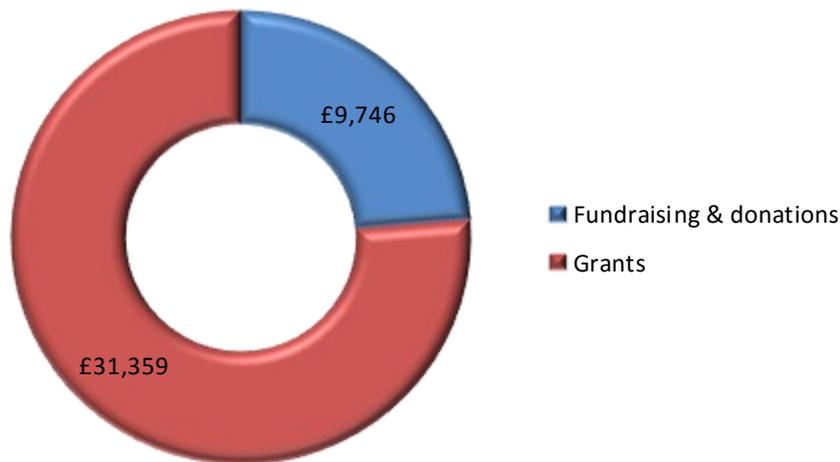
Vicar's Relief Fund

And last but not least, thank you to local businesses and residents who donated food, clothes and toys for our visitors and their children, in particular:

Cudi Supermarket, Flourish Craft Bakery and Hands on London

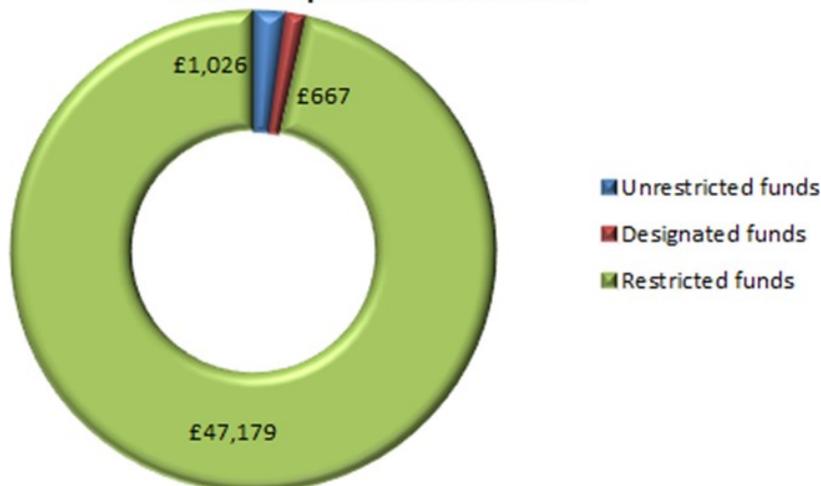
Our Finances

HMSC's Income 2014-2015



Our total income in 2014-15 was £41,105. The majority of this income was generated through grants from Trusts and Foundations. A key aim for 2015-16 has been to increase the income generated through fundraising and donations.

HMSC's Expenditure 2014-2015



Our total expenditure in 2014-15 was £48,872. This included the remainder of a number of grants made in the 2013-2014 period which carried over into this accounting year.

Funds carried forward and reserves

We carried forwards £15,801 of unrestricted funds—subsequently ensuring that we have reserves totalling just over 32% of our 2014-15 running costs. Our aim for 2015-16 has been to increase these reserves to circa 50% of core running costs.

Furthermore, we carried forwards £1,000 of designated funds and £1,025 of restricted funds, which were spent on earmarked programmes in the subsequent months as agreed with our funders.