

UWRSG NEWSLETTER

ISSUE 4

UPPER WHARFEDALE REFUGEE SUPPORT GROUP

MARCH 2017

Special Points of Interest:

- *Open Meeting 7 March 2017—6pm Kettlewell Village Hall*

UWRSG UPDATE

Following on from the very successful **Welcome Day** held in September 2016, members of UWRSG have been involved in a number of activities. Members have:

- Raised over £600 through carol singing;.
- Helped with the World Refugee Party in Skipton;
- Collected and donated household items and bedding for refugees in the UK and Europe.
- Organised or produced 'SNUG' packs (each pack contained a scarf, hat, gloves, socks and pants) for male refugees in Europe when winter was at its coldest;
- Supported other visit to the Dales (see overleaf).
- Met with Julian Smith MP to discuss the plight on unaccompanied child refugees.

There are lots if ideas about what we might do in the future and we hope to discuss some of those at the meeting on 7 March.

Who are we?

The **Upper Wharfedale Refugee Support Group** comprises a network of individuals living in the Upper Wharfedale area who are concerned for refugees and wish to help in some way.

We fundraise, donate clothing and household items, welcome refugees and write to elected representatives.

If you would like to be on our mailing list, email us at:

refugees@upperwharfedale.net

If you would like to raise funds or donate, visit the 'Just Giving' Page at:
<https://justgiving.com/upper-wharfedale-refugees>

Our next meeting at Kettlewell Village Hall on 7 March at 6pm is open to everyone.

Craven Refugee Support Network

The Craven Refugee Support Network (CRSN) covers the whole of the Craven area. Unlike UWRSG, it is a properly constituted charity and is acting as an umbrella organisation for smaller local groups such as ourselves. This means we can do things locally or join with a bigger group where this would be more helpful.

CRSN has been very busy over the winter supporting refugees locally with household goods, language, education and social support. They have welcomed Syrian families (around 25 refugees) that have arrived under the Government's Syrian Vulnerable Person's Resettlement Programme, and the group hosted the World Refugee Party in January. It is hosting its second *welcome weekend* in March.

Skipton is taking steps to become a *City of Sanctuary*. A City of Sanctuary is a city (town or dale) that welcomes refugees and where organisations (civil, religious, public and private) have 'signed up' to supporting the sanctuary principles and raising awareness.

UWRSG members are actively involved with CRSN initiatives and people with skills such as English teaching skills would be very welcome.

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UNACCOMPANIED CHILD REFUGEES

The plight of unaccompanied child refugees has had considerable attention in the press in recent weeks—**why and why now?**

In mid 2016, Europol (the EU police agency) estimated there were about 10,000 unaccompanied ‘missing’ children in Europe. Children are unaccompanied for many reasons. Sometimes they get separated from their family on their journey or were unaccompanied from the outset, choosing to leave their country or origin themselves or being sent away by their families. Boys who reach an age where they might be forced to fight form a significant number.

Refugees children can come to the UK to join a family member who are already designated a refugee. Last year the Government enabled more children to enter the country through the **Children at Risk Resettlement Scheme**. This scheme is often referred to as the ‘Dubs’ Amendment’ following the campaign by Lord Dubs to amend the Anti-illegal Immigration Act 2016.

Although the Government would not specify the number of children who would be accepted under the scheme, the impression was given that somewhere close to 3,000 might be expected (Dubs recommended 3,500).

Eligibility was restricted to children who arrived in Europe prior to March 2016 (before the EU-Turkey deal to repatriate new arrivals into Europe) and arrived at the Calais camp on or before 24 October 2016 (this was intended to deter children travelling in the home they might be accepted into the UK). potential asylum seekers had to be between 12-15 years old from any nationality, at high risk of sexual exploitation; 15 years old or younger from Syria or Sudan; or, under 15 and accompanying a sibling who met the criteria.

The Government closed the scheme, after taking about 350 child refugees. Not only is there concern about the low numbers accepted but also the surreptitious way in which it was done. The scheme was stopped without advising agencies or the local authorities who had committed to taking more children. There are still about 1,500 unaccompanied children, after the closure of the Calais camp, who thought they would be eligible to come to the UK but have been rejected.

Members of the UWRSG have lobbied politicians about the Government’s approach to child refugees—you might like to do the same.

Also, it has not been as easy for local authorities to find foster carers for young adults—in spite of so many people saying they would ‘open up their homes’. If you are considering fostering but would like to know that you would have the support of your local community/ refugee network, please get in touch.

Ideas

Individuals in the network have been involved in a number of activities since we first met in September 2015. Please let us know what you are doing. If you have an activity or event you would like to suggest or would like some help with, please get in contact. There are many people who are happy to help with a bigger project and through the Network we can put people in touch with each other.

If you would like to be put on our mailing list, please email: refugees@upperwharfedale.net



Refugees from Blackburn and Darwin planting 225 trees for the National Trust in Upper Wharfedale on Shrove Tuesday - before a well earned tea and pancakes at Buckden Village Institute.