

Supporting Refugees

A guide for Oxfordshire churches



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This leaflet was prepared by Christian Concern for One World (CCOW) with the assistance of our partners.

For over 25 years, CCOW has been working with Christians who seek to discern what *doing justice, loving kindness, and walking humbly with God* (MICAH 6:8) mean for us in our globalised world.

We offer resources for prayer and action on a range of issues, with a focus on responding to refugees, care for creation, and making trade fairer.

We don't aim to suggest that there are always easy answers, or to offer a programme that we want everyone to follow. Rather, we work collaboratively with a wide range of partners and seek to make connections that facilitate sharing of prayer, worship, experience and action. All our resources and services, except for some printed materials, are free.

(1st edition - January 2020, revised edition - May 2021)

Welcome

Welcome to CCOW's guide to supporting refugees in Oxfordshire. We hope that this booklet is useful for you and your church.

*"You shall love
the Lord your God...
and your neighbour
as yourself"*

LUKE 10:27

The difficulties facing refugees may not be in the news as much as they once were, but the situation remains very challenging. There are many Christians and churches in Oxfordshire who are already doing amazing work alongside refugees. But we're also aware that there are many more who would like to do something, but aren't sure where to start. To help connect these people and churches with opportunities, we provide:

- ▣ Support from our Churches Refugee Networking Officer, Joanna Schüder, who can provide pointers for prayer, reflection, and action – and connect you with others. She's available for conversations with individuals and churches about what they might do and how. No commitment is assumed; it's simply a service for people who are exploring opportunities.
- ▣ Networking events and a quarterly *Refugee Support Newsletter* for updates on local groups, resources, events and campaigns.
- ▣ A website with lots of materials – case studies of local action, prayer materials, basic facts, and more: **www.ccow.org.uk**
- ▣ And this booklet, introducing a number of local and national charities with whom we partner who can help you to get involved in supporting refugees.

You may decide to support one or more of these charities in their work. There may also be a local community group or another charity with which you would like to get involved. Or you may, as a church, want to start a new project welcoming refugees, with the support of Welcome Churches, or to campaign on issues relating to refugee policy. Take a look at the *Refugees and Forced Migration* page on our website to see the full range of possibilities.

To find out more, visit **www.ccow.org.uk**, sign up for our newsletter, attend one of our events, or get in touch with Joanna Schüder at **joanna@ccow.org.uk** or on **07774 474601**.



Asylum Welcome

Unit 7, Newtec Place, Magdalen Road,
Oxford, OX4 1RE

- development@asylum-welcome.org
- 01865 722082
- www.asylum-welcome.org

Oxford-based Asylum Welcome runs a wide range of high quality services to meet the priorities of asylum seekers, refugees and, where there is a compelling humanitarian need, other migrant groups.

We help over 1700 people and their families each year. We do this through the activities of 100+ active volunteers co-ordinated by a small, expert staff. We offer a warm welcome, expert advice, practical support and a range of activities. We work respectfully alongside people to help them take steps to improve complex situations. We listen to distressing stories, but Asylum Welcome is a cheerful place to be.

Services include:

- Asylum and immigration advice (OISC registered)
- General advice and assistance to alleviate homelessness and destitution
- One to one English classes and education advice, and help to find work
- Specialist youth service for children and young people who arrive in the UK unaccompanied by adults
- Resettlement support to Syrian families arriving on the government programme
- Welcome Centre with breakfasts and snacks and access to computers
- Food bank
- Recycled bicycles and laptops
- Prison visiting to foreign national prisoners
- Support to refugee-led community organisations
- Engaging in local and national initiatives to improve policies affecting asylum seekers and refugees
- A new service for EU nationals affected by Brexit



How you can help

Please do consider inviting us to your congregation to help raise awareness of the situation of refugees, gathering food or laptops for donation, encouraging donations, or perhaps holding a fundraiser for us. Thank you!



Refugee Support Service,
Red Cross House, Colwell Drive,
Abingdon, OX14 1AU

- tvrefugeesupport@redcross.org.uk
- 0300 333 5393 (Helpline)
- www.redcross.org.uk/get-help/get-help-as-a-refugee

The British Red Cross helps refugees, asylum seekers and vulnerable migrants become familiar with their local area and access essential services. They provide a free, impartial and confidential service including practical help, advice, information and emotional support.

Our destitution services are crucial to refugees, asylum seekers and vulnerable migrants who can often find themselves 'fallen through the cracks' in legal limbo, stuck with no right to work and little or no access to support.

In an emergency we can help with: food parcels, toiletries, essential clothing, sleeping bags, small cash hardship payments, travel costs to essential legal, Home Office and health appointments. We can also help people access: asylum support, legal advice, social care services, welfare benefits advice, family reunion travel assistance, health services, housing and homelessness advice, education and employment services.



In 2018 we supported 163 destitute refugees, asylum seekers, vulnerable migrants and their dependents in Oxfordshire, providing practical and financial support to those facing destitution and homelessness. We support and distribute destitution relief both directly and via our local Thames Valley partnerships with Asylum Welcome, Refugee Resource, Reading Refugee Support Group and Slough Refugee Support.

How you can help

Please help us to raise vital funds over the next year so we can keep providing emergency support to destitute refugees and asylum seekers. Your support will change lives – thank you.

Connection Support

213 Barns Road, Cowley, Oxford, OX4 3UT

- enquiries@connectionsupport.org.uk
- 01865 711267
- www.connectionsupport.org.uk/projects/svprs/



This service is specifically for Refugee families resettling in the UK as part of Central Government's UK VPRS Scheme (Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme).



We provide long-term, intensive emotional and practical support to help families settle into everyday life. This includes supporting them to manage the massive transition to living in Oxfordshire – making connections to health and mental health support, schools, language classes, and local communities; maintaining tenancies; budgeting; exploring work and volunteering opportunities; and understanding a new culture.

We work closely with both statutory and voluntary agencies across Oxfordshire to ensure that families get the correct support. We deliver planned, structured, individualised support to the families through a Support Planning process.

How you can help

We have two small teams – one based in Banbury and one in Oxford City. The support workers in Oxford City are currently working with around 9 families but they have supported 30 families in total. We have 13 families in Cherwell with 5 more due to arrive throughout the year. We are responsible for fully furnishing their new property so donations of furniture and household goods would be most welcome. Bikes and toys are always needed. Financial donations in order to purchase new larger kitchen appliances (we avoid buying second hand) would be equally appreciated.

Volunteers are crucial for both teams. A lot of the family members have regular hospital, doctor, dentist or Job Centre Plus appointments which can mean long periods of time spent with each individual: volunteers who can accompany them to these appointments are especially appreciated. We also need volunteers who can speak Arabic and English to interpret – and English speakers to hold general day-to-day conversation with the families.



Refugee Resource

Old Music Hall, 106–108 Cowley Road,
Oxford OX4 1JE (Entrance at 54 Marston
Street)

- communications@refugeeresource.org
- 01865 403280
- www.refugeeresource.org

Refugee Resource provides psychological, social and practical support for refugees, asylum seekers and vulnerable migrants, helping them to heal from trauma, bereavement and suffering, and to build new lives as part of Oxfordshire's diverse community.

Our services include: counselling and psychotherapy, mentoring, advice, advocacy and outreach, and women's services. In the last year, we supported over 350 clients from 43 different countries.

Our experienced counselling team specialises in working with people with complex trauma and post-traumatic stress disorder, including young people and unaccompanied asylum-seeking children. We also provide supervision and training for other organisations on mental health, PTSD and cross-cultural working to enable agencies to work more effectively with refugees and vulnerable migrants.



How you can help

Make a donation: our work is only possible thanks to our amazing supporters. Your gift will help refugees, asylum seekers and vulnerable migrants recover from trauma and rebuild their lives: www.refugeeresource.org.uk/donate

Fundraise for us: interested in taking part in a sponsored run? You can select us as your chosen charity on JustGiving or Everyclick. Or perhaps you'd rather host a meal and your guests can make a small donation in return: www.refugeeresource.org.uk/fundraising

Volunteer: there are volunteering opportunities available with various services at Refugee Resource, including the mentoring service, the women's service and social inclusion. Find out more at: www.refugeeresource.org.uk/volunteering



Refugee Education UK

1st Floor, The Salvation Army Building,
32 Manor Park Rd, London NW10 4JJ

- hello@reuk.org
- 07562262718
- www.reuk.org

Refugee Education UK (formerly Refugee Support Network) equips young refugees to build positive futures by thriving in education.

For refugees arriving in our area, education is a priority: it's how lives begin to be rebuilt and hope for the future is rekindled. But getting back into and progressing in education is fraught with challenge.

We want things to be different. Our Oxford hub runs our flagship Educational Mentoring programme for asylum seeking and refugee children and youth, most of whom arrived unaccompanied. Local volunteers, called mentors, get trained and matched with a young person to provide them with one hour of weekly support on what they find challenging in their education - be it English, Maths or general homework support.

From our main office in London, we also support young people's well-being, access and progression through further and higher education, as well as conducting research and advocacy on refugees and education.



How you can help

If you'd like to become a mentor, please fill out the inquiry form on our website: www.reuk.org. We also welcome volunteers with a range of different skills, so email hello@reuk.org if you'd like to join our effort.



Sanctuary Hosting

171 Oxford Road Oxford OX4 2ES

- info@sanctuaryhosting.org
- 07818 555986 or 07378 302491
- www.sanctuaryhosting.org

Sanctuary Hosting helps people in the Thames Valley with spare rooms to temporarily host refugees and asylum seekers who are facing homelessness.

Sanctuary Hosting offers people the chance to give a bed – for however long they want – to someone seeking a new, safer life in our community. We match generous hosts with refugees and migrants in need of temporary shelter. When a placement is made, both host and guest are allocated a volunteer support worker and we provide training for hosts and volunteers.

The idea for ‘Sanctuary Hosting’ came at the Refugees Welcome demonstration in Oxford in July 2015. In his speech to the crowd, our founder Wyon Stansfeld asked, “who would be willing to open up their home to a refugee or migrant in need?”

The response was startling. Many people volunteered, and so our service began. We work in partnership with The British Red Cross, Citizens Advice Reading, and other local partners to support refugees.

By the end of 2020, Sanctuary Hosting had 85 hosts, past and present, and had made over 24,470 nights of accommodation available for over 128 people in need. We were able to keep hosting throughout 2020 and, as of April 2021, were hosting 12 guests across the Thames Valley including Oxford, Reading and Milton Keynes.



How you can help

We are always looking for more hosts, volunteers and financial supporters. Go to sanctuaryhosting.org/get-involved for more information.



Welcome Churches

Bridge House, Riverside Court,
Pride Park, Derby, DE24 8HY

- info@welcomechurches.org
- 01332 498041
- www.welcomechurches.org

Whether your church is big or small, urban or rural, traditional or contemporary, there is something you can do to welcome refugees.



Welcome Churches can help and support your church to be a welcoming community for refugees in Oxfordshire.

How you can help

Welcome Training

Receive training from Welcome Churches for your church volunteers and coordinators in welcoming refugees. This is particularly relevant for churches looking to develop their own work with refugees in the church.

Welcome Network

If you know of refugees moving away from Oxfordshire, use our Welcome Network of refugee-welcoming churches across the UK to refer them to a church that will give them a warm welcome in their new location.

[**www.welcomechurches.org/find**](http://www.welcomechurches.org/find)

Welcome Holidays

We offer training and support for your church to plan and run a Welcome Holiday, offering refugees and asylum seekers a short break in your community. It's an opportunity for your church to join in with welcoming refugees by planning and hosting a holiday.

Welcoming Hong Kongers

Join the UKHK Network for welcoming Hong Kongers to the UK. Welcome Churches are running this new Network for churches to join and welcome those newly arriving from Hong Kong. www.ukhk.org/church to find out more and to join.

Next Steps

We hope you have found this booklet useful. Please don't hesitate to get in touch with us or our partners if you'd like more information or want to get involved in an activity.

As you think over what you might do to support refugees, whether as an individual or as part of a church community, here's a prayer you may want to use.

*Lord God, you have at times called your people to journey to new lands
And you have often reminded them to welcome and give justice to
the stranger.*

*We thank you for gathering us in this time and this place.
And we pray that you will help us to see how we can be people of
welcome, love and justice.*

*Help us, we pray, to offer hospitality that reflects your generous love
And an openness to others that sees your image and likeness in
every person.*

*Show us where we can play our part in shaping a society where all
have fair access to protection by the law,
People fleeing danger find sanctuary,
And everyone is given opportunities to flourish.*

*We ask this in the name of Jesus our Lord,
Whose parents fled their homeland to protect him from harm
And who commands us to love our neighbours as ourselves.*

Prepared by **Christian Concern for One World** with kind permission from our colleagues at Asylum Welcome, British Red Cross, Connection Support, Refugee Resource, Refugee Support Network, Sanctuary Hosting and Welcome Churches for providing information, logos and photos for their organisations.

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www.ccow.org.uk

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