



## JRS UK

Accompanying, serving and advocating on behalf of the most marginalised people in UK society – refugees

## Who are we?

JRS UK is a charity working to accompany, serve and advocate on behalf of the most marginalised people in UK society – refugees and other forcibly displaced persons.

- We are grounded in Catholic social teaching.
- We work with all refugees regardless of their faith.
- Our staff and volunteers come from many faiths and none.

We are proud to call people who came to our country in search of safety, our friends.

## What do we do?

We work closely with refugee friends who become destitute during the asylum process, and those who are taken into detention. To support them, we provide:

- **A weekly Day Centre**, where refugee friends can share a nourishing meal and receive essentials including a travel grant for a bus pass and toiletries.
- **Creative and therapeutic activities**
- **A small hosting scheme** for refugees who face homelessness.
- **A legal advice service**, specialising in cases that need longer-term research.
- **An outreach service for people in detention.**
- **Research for advocacy to policy makers.**

## Support through the pandemic

When the first lockdown began in March 2020, we took the difficult decision to close our weekly Day Centre. On p8, you can find out more about how we formed an Emergency Response Team to take our Day Centre services on the road and found alternative ways to support over 300 refugee friends during the pandemic.

Front cover photo: First Day Centre of 2020

## Letter from the Director

Our work to support our refugee friends changed radically during the course of the last year.

This review covers October 2019 to September 2020.

For the first half of that period, we continued our work to welcome our refugee friends to our Day Centre, and our team continued to accompany people in Harmondsworth and Colnbrook detention centres. Every Thursday, our doors opened, and our refugee friends joined us for a hot, nourishing meal. They were able to access essential support, including a weekly £10 travel grant for a bus pass and toiletries. We continued to offer creative and therapeutic activities, and legal advice.

In March, the halfway point in the year, the country went into lockdown for the first time, changing everything. We could no longer visit people in immigration detention or open our doors and welcome in our refugee friends. We had to move fast to support our refugee friends through the global pandemic.

Despite the challenges that the team faced with the outbreak of COVID-19 and the subsequent lockdown restrictions, we remained committed to accompanying, serving and advocating for our refugee friends, knowing that this crisis was likely to impact the most vulnerable in our community the hardest.

Within a matter of weeks, we had turned our Day Centre effectively into a food and hygiene bank and had begun monthly deliveries to refugee friends across London. Getting much needed financial support to people quickly was vital and we managed to do this with the introduction of the Equals card which can be topped up remotely.

I am incredibly grateful for the agility and creativity of the staff team, many of whom have changed roles or taken on new responsibilities as a result of the pandemic. Also, to the many new volunteers who reached out to JRS during this uncertain time to offer their time and support. Thanks to you, despite the challenges, we have been able to support 346 refugee friends this year.

We anticipate that the months ahead will continue to be uncertain, with changing public health restrictions and the COVID-19 virus continuing to pose a serious threat to people across our communities. We thank you for your ongoing support as we strive to keep adapting and responding to the needs of our refugee friends.



**Sarah Teather**

## Our vision

Our vision is of a world where all who have to flee their homes are welcomed with love. We accompany refugees to affirm that God is present, even in the most difficult and tragic moments of human history. In companionship with Jesus Christ and serving his mission in the midst of refugees, JRS can be an effective sign of God's love and reconciliation.

## Our mission

JRS UK has a mission to accompany, serve as companions, and advocate on behalf of refugees and other forcibly displaced persons. We work with all refugees regardless of their faith.

We give priority to situations of great need, where a more universal good may be achieved, and to needs others are not attending to. We work where we have expertise, can join with partners or enable others to become involved.

JRS UK has a special ministry to work with refugees who have been detained or made destitute by the asylum process in the UK, who are among the most excluded groups in society today. The work of JRS is rooted in a belief in the dignity of the person and justice in the world.

## Our values

JRS UK is grounded in Catholic social teaching: our work is based on the principles of hospitality and carried out in a spirit of compassion and solidarity, encouraging participation and community, aiming to give hope, justice and dignity to refugees, people seeking asylum and forced migrants. JRS staff are of many faiths and none.

As a work of the Society of Jesus, we are called to work with the most marginalised, drawing on the charism and principles of Ignatian spirituality. We are inspired by the love and compassion of Jesus for the poor and excluded.

## Refugee friend's story

**“It's not just financial. It's emotional and psychological help I get from JRS. It's like a family.”**



Harmondsworth Detention Centre

Akbar came to the UK in the hope of finding safety. Instead, he experienced hostility from Government officials, detention, homelessness and destitution.

Akbar travelled to the UK in 2004 after making the difficult decision to leave his home. “I have loving parents, one sister, friends.” But when the government began to persecute Akbar's community and political party, he feared for his life. “Suddenly government changed its policy... they arrest somebody and, on the way to jail, they just killed them.”

As Akbar discovered, claiming asylum in the UK is difficult. He immediately encountered hostility from Government officials. “I think they already have it in their mind – they don't believe.”

Akbar had found a place to stay when he was detained without warning.

“[I was] treated like a criminal. Even prison is better than detention. If you

go to prison, you expect [it]. But in detention, you don't know how long you will be in detention.”

Akbar was held in detention for eight traumatic months. Upon release, he realised he had lost everything.

“I came to the house where I used to live. This person refused to give me the place, thinking that I did some kind of crime. So even all my possessions, he had mostly thrown away. I was homeless for two, three weeks. Sometimes in a night shelter – you don't really sleep because you have a fear somebody's next to you, someone violent and they just attack you with no reason.”

Sometime later, Akbar heard about JRS and came to our Day Centre for the first time.

For the first time in many years, Akbar received a warm welcome when he visited our Day Centre. As he discovered, food, toiletries and a travel grant for a bus pass are only the start of the support we provide.

"It's not just financial. It's emotional and psychological help I get from JRS. It's like a family."

Akbar was found a place to stay through the JRS At Home scheme, where religious communities, parishes and people with a spare room can host refugee friends who are homeless.

"The people where I go are loving. They take so much care about you. They provide you everything. Nice breakfast, lunch, dinner, accommodation, laundry. It's the biggest help for [me].... it's given me so much courage."

There couldn't be a starker contrast between the kindness of his hosts, and the hostility of the Government.

"At the moment, the Government is very against Asylum Seekers or refugees. I don't know why... They even not thinking how could a person survive without any job. When I was [in] detention, they release me. They did not think, 'where I will go? How will I eat? They are not worried about our survival, they're just saying to go back to your country."

Akbar continues to live in limbo, awaiting a decision: "It's under consideration. At the moment, I'm just waiting for my application result."

It's hard to live with the uncertainty, but thanks to the support of JRS UK, Akbar feels more hopeful for the future: "Good time is coming... It's giving me big hope."

**Here at JRS UK, we commit to supporting refugee friends at every step of their journey, so they do not feel – and are not – forgotten.**



"At Home" with a Host family

## Essential support at our Day Centre





Until March, the doors of our Day Centre were open every Thursday.

Despite having fled persecution or danger at home, our refugee friends find little or no welcome in our country. Not allowed to work and not entitled to any support from the state, they face destitution and homelessness. Some go from sofa to sofa, depending on the kindness of friends for a place to stay. Others sleep on the streets or try to close their eyes on a night bus.

Our Day Centre is one of the few places they can count on receiving a warm welcome. They are treated with dignity and as friends. We sit down together to share a nourishing home-cooked meal.

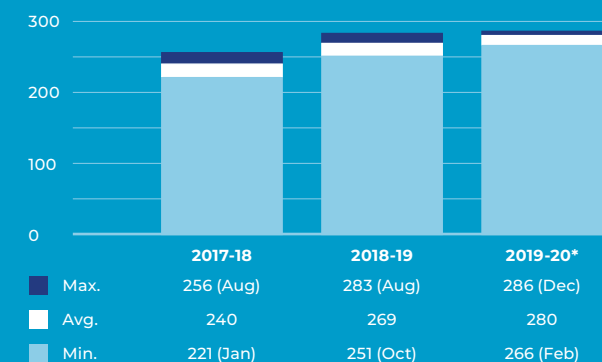
There's lively conversation, smiles and laughter. We provide emotional and practical support to the most marginalized people in our society.

### What we provide

-  A hot meal
-  A weekly £10 travel grant for bus passes
-  Toiletries
-  Creative and therapeutic activities, including singing and art
-  Legal advice

### A year interrupted

From October to March, our Day Centre welcomed 280 refugee friends in an average month. Then our doors closed and we found new ways to deliver our service (see overleaf).



\*The Day Centre opened throughout October to February



## The pandemic is one of the greatest challenges we've faced...

Creative and therapeutic activities help refugees find hope and joy.

Closing the doors of our Day Centre went against every instinct – we knew how hard lockdown would be for our refugee friends. But it was the only way to keep everyone safe during the global pandemic.

Our first task was to get in touch with all our refugee friends and find out whether they had a place to stay. We assured them that our support would continue with the priority being getting anyone without a place to stay into emergency accommodation.



Richard and Aidan preparing food for deliveries

“Just less than two months ago, I was still able to visit one of the few day centres run by charities who provided hot meals for migrants. To be eligible, an asylum seeker like me must show a recent ‘refusal letter’ from the Home Office. Once I registered, the support would come by way of about two meals per week – often the only hot meals I would eat for an entire week.

“People like me are unable to take up employment, rent accommodation or apply for any benefits, and we certainly cannot open a UK bank account. We belong to a rather unfortunate category of immigrants whose lack of status actually means we have ‘no recourse to public funds’. This simply means we can only rely on charitable organisations for basic subsistence.”

*A refugee friend*



## Adapting to the pandemic

We formed an Emergency Response Team to get our Day Centre on the road. Thanks to our longstanding partnerships, we were able to source and package up food for delivery. Then came a call for volunteer drivers. The response was overwhelming – as many as 50 new volunteers joined us.

We also found new ways to deliver financial hardship support using pre-paid charge cards to help our refugee friends buy urgent essentials. Instead of travel allowances for bus passes, we switched to top ups for mobile phones to ensure we could keep in touch.

Then, through our network of 140 volunteers, we provided friendship and support over the phone.

On the following pages, you'll see how we adapted other parts of our work, from legal advice to creative and

therapeutic activities, ensuring we continued to accompany our refugee friends through the unprecedented challenges of the pandemic.

### A snapshot of our work during the first lockdown

- Contacted and traced more than 290 refugee friends.
- Delivered 2,154 parcels of food and toiletries across London.
- Distributed 5,101 £15 hardship grants to assist refugee friends with essential needs.
- Gave out 2,222 mobile phone top ups with a month's worth of credit.
- Provided over-the-phone emotional support to our refugee friends.

## “I am being asked more than that: to be vulnerable alongside and with another.”

Debbie became a volunteer during the first lockdown. She helped deliver food and toiletries to our refugee friends, soon realising she needed to do more than serve, but also accompany.

“I joined JRS as the coronavirus lockdown started, responding to an invitation to give time and money – delivering food bags, deeply conscious of inequalities in my life and that of refugee friends, and others. I could feel it is not enough to do a good deed for another, or allow myself to be open, realising deeper down that I am being asked more than that: to be vulnerable alongside and with another.”

## Building strength. Finding joy.

Refugee friends who come to our Day Centre can also choose to take part in creative and therapeutic activities, including yoga, art and drama. By joining in, our refugee friends can find joy in a shared activity and feeling part of a caring and supportive community.

When our Day Centre closed as part of the first lockdown, we set up new activities online, including a poetry-writing workshop that enabled our refugee friends to explore their thoughts, feelings and experiences.

When restrictions allowed over the summer, we invited families to join us for a safe and socially distanced picnic at St Francis of Assisi parish in Stratford. This was a rare and precious chance to be together.



“One of our friends even told us she had not taken her children anywhere since lockdown, so this picnic was a real relief for her and her little ones.”

*Rhiannon Prideaux, JRS  
Emergency Response Team  
coordinator.*



## Providing vital legal support

Many of our refugee friends have complicated, long-running claims. Without legal help, they're at risk of coming up against errors in procedure and injustice.

Our team of two OISC advisors, and volunteers work closely with our refugee friends to research their cases, provide legal advice and accompany them to appointments. Without them, our refugee friends would face having to navigate an extremely complex system alone. The first step is to meet and assess where they are with their claim, and then plan a path forward.

During lockdown, it wasn't possible to meet in person, but we did everything possible to continue our work remotely.

Cases have progressed more slowly and the Home Office processes have also slowed. But refugee friends have continued to be able to access legal advice from our team.

### A snapshot of our work 2019-20

- 141 refugee friends provided with legal advice.
- Full representation for 60 refugee friends.



## Supporting refugee friends in detention

Being taken into detention can be deeply traumatic for our refugee friends, who do not know when or if they will be released.



Claudia Bonamini, JRS Europe Policy and Advocacy Officer visited JRS UK

Our refugee friends live with the constant threat of being taken into detention – an experience many describe as the most isolated and traumatic in their lives. They feel like they are in prison, but without a sentence because they do not know when or if they will be released.

Some are sent back to their country of origin. Many are not. They are left to return to a life of homelessness and destitution in the UK. It's completely inhumane.

JRS UK continues to support refugee friends when they are in detention. Our volunteers make visits to men held at Colnbrook and Harmondsworth, and women in the short-term holding facility at Colnbrook, the Sahara Unit. They listen, provide emotional support, and show our refugee friends someone is still thinking of them. We also liaise with solicitors, and help book appointments.

"The detainees can spend months and months locked up. The worries and uncertainties make them sick. Several people complained about not being able to sleep, having head and stomach aches. The JRS volunteers told me how often people share suicidal thoughts and say that knowing that the visitors will come is one of the few things keeping them going in there.

"More often than not, listening is the only thing visitors can do. And sometimes even that is challenging, when there is no common language and you see people struggling because they really want to tell you something. Leaving a detention centre, one inevitably feels relief, but also some guilt, because you are going to your home, but the people you met are staying there."

*Claudia Bonamini, JRS Europe Policy and Advocacy Officer, visited JRS UK to find out more about the UK asylum system.*

## Detention is an even darker place during the pandemic

When the first lockdown began, UK detention centres closed their doors to visitors.

Lockdown was an isolating time for many people, but surely no one felt more alone than those being held in detention facilities. With visits no longer permitted, there was little if no access to the outside world. The cramped conditions made distancing impossible, putting refugees at high risk of catching the virus.

Our team of volunteers began to make regular phone calls to offer company, a listening ear and, for those who needed it, counselling to help them through a traumatic time when they

felt vulnerable, scared and isolated. We had 22 Detention Volunteers working throughout the lockdown.

We've also supported refugee friends released from detention as lockdown began. They emerged to find the shops closed, the streets empty and barely a car on the road. Everyone was at home, but they had no home to go to. Our Detention Team helped them into emergency accommodation and we're continuing to provide vital support.

"One refugee friend has made clear how much it means to him knowing he has someone who is always there who he can talk to over the phone, as he is held in detention. For me it really reinforced our mission and why we do what we do."

*Will, JRS UK Detention Outreach officer.*





## At home with friends

Through *At Home*, religious communities, parishes and people with a spare room can host a refugee friend who is homeless.

With no right to work or receive support from the Government, many of our refugee friends depend on the kindness of friends who may offer a sofa or floor to sleep on. Others spend their days and nights on the streets.

Through our *At Home* hosting scheme, refugee friends like Davina, who has been hosted twice, find they have a safe place to stay. Finally, they experience kindness and a welcome.

"Both hosting places, they were so kind, so caring and so generous."

Davina explains what having a place to stay means to a refugee friend. "It is helping them have that moment of peace to figure out what is the next move because it's so harsh out there. Homelessness is so difficult."

### A snapshot of our work in 2019-20

This year, we provided 3,443 nights' accommodation for 17 refugee guests.

## Spotlight on staff and volunteers: Richard

2019-20 is the first of two years Richard will spend with JRS UK as part of his Jesuit training.



"The rupture of the pandemic hit me on the Thursday after we closed the centre in March 2020 as I noticed the silence and absence of people. The local church bell struck 10am and I thought how, normally, this was when the centre would be at its busiest. However, at that moment, away from the centre, JRS volunteers and staff were moving very quickly to provide remote support to refugee friends: through online activities, deliveries of food and phone support. We've also managed to respond to a constantly changing environment during that time – not just changes brought about by the pandemic which has taken us from food and toiletries deliveries to being a pop-up vaccine clinic, but even in our work advocating around increased Channel crossings.

The Chilean St. Alberto Hurtado SJ, after whom our centre is named, said:

"The greater the task, the smaller one feels; better to have the humility to

begin great tasks with the danger of failing, than to reduce ones' goal out of pride, in order to guarantee success."

When we adapted the centre into a food distribution centre, I knew what Hurtado meant; I worried about failing, that there was great ambition, but we were going to run out of food or not have the drivers. However, the generosity of volunteers and supporters, the way other organisations reached out to collaborate with us was remarkable. Anonymous neighbours bought hundreds of pounds of food. The level and difference of response has been wonderful, and we kept going...

I was struck by how central JRS is for many of our refugee friends – their social lives, opportunities for volunteering and activities, the specialist support they receive from the JRS legal project, destitution team, or the work with post-detention support.



## Income & Expenditure 2019-20

### 2019-20 Actual Income\*

Jesuits in Britain Grant	£431,880
Individual Giving	£296,731
Community Fundraising	£32,192
Religious Orders	£16,000
Trusts & Foundations	£383,696
Gift Aid	£10,016
Legacy	£-
Earned Income (incl. CJRS income)	£4,901
<b>Total income</b>	<b>£1,175,415</b>

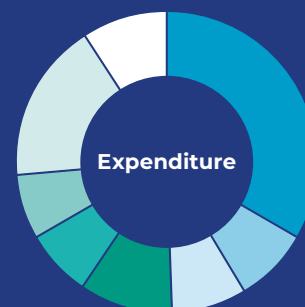
### 2019-20 Actual\* expenditure

Day Centre / COVID-19 ERT*	£371,973
Refugee Activities	£91,070
Accommodation & Hosting	£90,960
Legal Project	£112,759
Detention Outreach	£79,133
Fundraising	£80,001
Advocacy & Communications	£195,882
Office Administration & Governance	£105,788
<b>Total expenditure</b>	<b>£1,127,566</b>

\* Financial year end September 2020. \* The Coronavirus pandemic restrictions forced the closure of our face-to-face Day Centre. We immediately pivoted our work to create an Emergency Response Team (ERT) and support refugees and asylum seekers remotely. As the pandemic restrictions continue, we continue to allocate Day Centre funds (with agreement of the relevant funders) to the COVID-19 ERT. The expenditure lines are combined in these accounts for ease. Further detail is available on request.



- Jesuits in Britain (Province) Grant **37%**
- Individual Giving **25%**
- Community Fundraising **3%**
- Religious Orders **1%**
- Trusts & Foundations **33%**
- Gift Aid **1%**



- Day Centre / COVID-19 ERT **33%**
- Refugee Activities **8%**
- Accommodation & Hosting **8%**
- Legal Project **10%**
- Detention Outreach **7%**
- Fundraising **7%**
- Advocacy & Communications **17%**
- Office Administration & Governance **9%**

## Governance

JRS UK is a work of Jesuits in Britain, who are governed by a Board of Trustees, chaired by the Provincial, Fr Damian Howard SJ. We have a close working relationship with the global work of JRS through the International office in Rome and the European office in Brussels.

We work in partnership with other religious congregations, humanitarian organisations and with refugees themselves, encouraging co-responsibility, communal discernment and participative decision-making.

We endeavour to be openly accountable for our work. We have an independent bank account, budget, and payroll. The Jesuits in Britain delegate oversight of JRS UK to a Management Committee chaired by Fr Keith McMillan SJ, who is also a trustee of the Jesuits in Britain. Our Management Committee includes Jesuits, other charity practitioners, and refugees we accompany. The Management Committee reports to the British Jesuit Provincial.

The Jesuits in Britain are The Society of Jesus Trust (of 1929) for Roman Catholic Purposes. Registered as a Charity in England & Wales (230165) and Scotland (40490).

## A big and heartfelt thank you

All too often, refugees who came to the UK in search of safety meet with hostility. To everyone who supports JRS UK, thank you for being different.

Every year, we face a huge struggle to raise the funds needed to do our work. Without your compassion and kindness, we couldn't continue. We're extremely grateful to you all – to the people and families who send donations; to the faith and community groups who come together to support us; and the foundations who provide grants.

Thanks to your generosity and kindness, we can accompany, serve and advocate for refugees and people seeking asylum.



## Thank you to everyone who supported refugee friends in 2019-20.

Kind supporters include:

- Albert Gubay Charitable Foundation
- Cardinal's Lenten Appeal
- Catholic Women's League
- Churches Together in Hampstead (CTIH)
- Congregation of Jesus
- Congregation of La Retraite In England and Ireland
- Daughters of the Heart of Mary
- FareShare
- Farm Street Parish
- Fidel Goetz Foundation
- First Love Foundation
- Hands On London
- Holy Apostles Catholic Church
- Holy Family of Bordeaux
- Holy Family of Bordeaux - Provincial House
- Iceland Foods Charitable Foundation
- LDS Charities
- London Churches Refugee Fund
- London Legal Support Trust
- LPC Law
- Marist Sisters
- Mayfield School
- Methodist Church Fund for Human Need
- Migration Exchange
- National Lottery - Awards for All
- Porticus Foundation
- Positive Action In Housing
- Religious of Christian Education
- Religious of the Assumption
- Sacred Heart Parish, Edinburgh
- School Sisters of Notre Dame
- Sisters of St Joseph of Peace
- SocialBox.Biz
- Society of Jesus
- Society of Saint Francis
- Society of the Holy Child Jesus
- St Aloysius Church
- St Anthony of Padua
- St Boniface Church
- St Dunstan's Catholic Church, Woking
- St John's Beaumont Preparatory Boys School
- St Olave's
- St Wilfrid's Parish
- Suburban Taverns Limited Charitable Trust
- The Bernadette Charitable Trust
- The Hygiene Bank
- The Most Holy Trinity Church
- The Pret Foundation
- The Tim & Pat Stapenhurst Charitable Trust
- Ursuline Sisters
- Waitrose & Partners Wapping
- Wakefield and Tetley Trust



## Accompany

## Be part of our community

JRS wouldn't be who we are without the special people who dedicate their time, energy and passion through volunteering. Volunteers support a range of our work – from fundraising and supporting the Day Centre, to packing toiletry packs and visiting people in detention.

### Interested in volunteering?

Contact [uk@jrs.net](mailto:uk@jrs.net) or  
call **020 7488 7310** to find out more.

## Help us support refugees

### Donate:

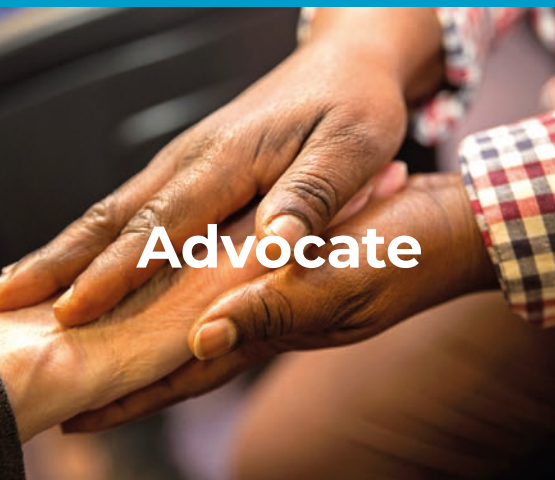
On our website:  
[www.jrsuk.net/donate](http://www.jrsuk.net/donate)  
Call us: **020 7488 7310**

### Raise awareness:

Follow us: [@JRSUK](https://twitter.com/JRSUK)  
Like us: [/jesuitrefugeeserviceuk](https://www.facebook.com/jesuitrefugeeserviceuk)  
Subscribe: [www.jrsuk.net/subscribe](http://www.jrsuk.net/subscribe)



## Serve



## Advocate

Jesuit Refugee Service UK  
Hurtado Jesuit Centre  
2 Chandler Street  
London E1W 2QT

**020 7488 7310**  
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