

DEVON AND CORNWALL REFUGEE SUPPORT



2022 Annual Report



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Chair's Introduction

It is with considerable pleasure that I write this introduction to the year 2022 at DCRS. It has been a year of great change in every way. Our new CEO, Alex Vessis, has brought energy, youth and vision to his role so needed at a time when asylum seekers and refugees (ASRs) are facing the huge challenges of, not just a slower Home Office process producing lengthy delays and negative media, but also the arrival of 950 or so recent ASRs housed in hotels within Devon & Cornwall. We cannot leave them totally unsupported but our limited resources make it difficult to do all we would like.

Our board of trustees who manage DCRS has also had major changes. I must thank the enormous, incalculable contribution of former Chair, Hazel Poad, John Shinner and John Jebb with their indefatigable involvement in the everyday running and the oversight of DCRS. Also, the long serving Arnold Melhuish, as Vice Chair. DCRS could not have survived and prospered without them. Many thanks also to Pat Joyce, former Team Leader, for her many years of service.

You can see from this and other publications that our print media has moved on several gears and that we are now represented on social media platforms. Our premises had a complete refurbishment in 2020 and are now properly fit for purpose. Further areas of our work will be outlined in other sections of this review, specifically, a CEO's report, Finance, Volunteers, Activities and highlights from newsletters. I hope you enjoy the format and photos.



Ian Gasper, Chair



CEO Report



January 2022 started with DCRS finding its feet after the difficulties that the COVID pandemic caused. We re-opened to the public, focusing on our core work and word quickly spread through the community. From our previous learning we decided to have a hybrid triage service, offering both face to face, email and telephone services. These changes allowed us to better support both counties, building relationships and training other voluntary organisations.

The amount of activities we offered increased with new colleagues joining the service. This involved holding Mental Health days out offering a variety of different things from paddleboarding to wild cooking on Dartmoor. We built new relationships and rekindled old ones so that we could make sure our offer was the best it could be with the funding available to us.

Our core activities of English classes and Music continued gaining good traction with our English classes receiving an average of 20+ students three times a week. The English classes continue to give our service users the building blocks required whilst they wait for spaces with the ESOL qualified provision in the city.

We developed our website, social media channels and newsletter with the help of new volunteers and existing staff members. This has resulted with weekly updates, in a more cohesive straightforward website and quarterly newsletters that are sent out to all our supporters and service users keeping them up to date.

Three new projects began at DCRS to complement our core services. The **Fresh Claims Project** supporting failed asylum seekers to find another chance to re-enter the asylum system and move out of destitution. The **A.R.E Home** providing wrap around support for the same group to have short term accommodation, subsistence support, one to one mental health support and access to our existing services. Finally, **Health Point** began in June, offering a triage service with dedicated GP and mental health professionals available every Tuesday providing clearer access to the NHS.

In February, we saw the beginning of the Initial Accommodation Hotels in Tiverton and subsequently an additional six hotels were added across both counties, increasing the capacity of those that we serve by an additional 943 people. Our service again needed to adapt to the increased demand. Logistically, we are unable to access the area from Ilfracombe to Newquay, so we trained existing voluntary sector groups wishing to help in each region instead. We continue to offer specialist support.

Through all these changes we have developed a strong core team with a dedicated group of 40 volunteers who continue to work towards creating a fair, humane and safe asylum experience for all.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Alex Vessis'.

Alex Vessis, CEO

Mission, Vision & Values



DCRS Vision

A fair, humane and safe asylum experience for all

DCRS Mission

To promote independence, prevent destitution and support those seeking refuge to build their new home in the UK

DCRS Values

- **Welcoming** – being inclusive, accessible and safe; working with empathy, understanding and integrity
- **Experienced and persistent** – providing high quality advocacy and support to those seeking refuge, no matter how long the process takes
- **A lifeline** – helping people when they have no-one else to turn to
- **A place of hope** – fostering resilience and supporting people to use and develop their skills to become part of the wider community, keep active and build a new life
- **Connected** – providing the best possible service by collaborating with other organisations and supporters whilst sharing best practise
- **Responsive** – adapting to the evolving needs of our community
- **Well informed** – developing and maintaining excellent standards of knowledge for staff and volunteers

Financial Report

The financials of DRCS in 2022 have remained strong, with a surplus in year of £3k.

Income came in from ongoing funders including the Lottery Community Fund, Aurum Trust, AB Charitable, Blue Thread and Lloyds Bank Foundation, as well as smaller grants and significant donations of £40k, over £7k higher than in 2021.

In year expenses were slightly higher than anticipated, with increased expenditure on computers as it was established much of the existing hardware needed replacing. The demand for translators also increased, which is an increasingly expensive resource. The charity is looking at alternatives to the current pay per minute service.

The charity has no ongoing debtors or creditors.

		Unrestricted Total 2022 £	Restricted Total 2022 £	Total Funds 2022 £	Total Funds 2021 £
INCOMING RESOURCES					
Income from donations and legacies	2	189,678	26,235	215,913	306,369
Charitable Activities Income	3	2,592		2,592	703
Investment Income	4				8
TOTAL INCOMING RESOURCES		192,278	26,227	218,505	307,080
RESOURCES EXPENDED					
Direct Charitable expenditure	5	204,120	11,220	215,340	239,962
Governance Costs		198		198	
TOTAL RESOURCES EXPENDED		204,318	11,220	215,538	239,962
NET MOVEMENT IN FUNDS		-11,716	14,684	2,967	67,117
BALANCES BROUGHT FORWARD					
AS AT 1st JANUARY 2022		98,627	0	98,627	31,510
BALANCES CARRIED FORWARD AS AT 31 DECEMBER 2021		86,911	14,684	101,594	98,627



DCRS Wellness Programme



January 2022 saw the UK coming out of the Covid-19 pandemic. The displaced community however, evidently took much longer to recover, which felt disingenuous given the situation many were already facing before Covid.

Throughout the year, the focus of the activities and a majority of the working hours used have been spent on connecting with Service Users (SUs), tracking down and getting to know the people who arrived.

The warm weather during the spring and summer provided a great assistance for the activities programme as it meant a whole range of outdoor activities could be carried out, week after week, ranging from water sports to cycling.

The activities programme was busy and packed for the summer. Suvi rejoined from June and spent the first month attending activities one day a week and getting to know people. From September–October things have slowed down, partly because of the colder and wetter weather, partly because lots of SUs are back in schools and have less time to attend activities.

We will close the year off with a photography exhibition, a culmination of a 6-week course and a Christmas Party on the 15th December with gifts being given out.

57

DCRS lead days out

183

individuals accessed
our service

8

Partnership programs



Casework

ARE Home

Following the Crowdfunder campaign we launched at the beginning of September, we have raised £21,345 alongside a £10,000 donation from the National Lottery and £5,000 from POP. Amazingly, this means we have exceeded our £36,000 target! Thank you for all your donations, social media shares and support for the most vulnerable in our community. For future updates about the project, please head to the News page on our website.

Since our successful Crowdfunder, we have housed two service users so far who are also engaging with our Fresh Claims Project as they are Appeal Rights Exhausted. PATH (Plymouth Access To Housing) have been providing the accommodation while we support the service user with food vouchers. With their basic needs met, they can work with our team towards submitting a Fresh Claim.

Hotels in Devon & Cornwall

There are now at least six hotels in Devon and Cornwall housing 943 asylum seekers in Newquay, Ilfracombe, Paignton, Torquay, and Exeter.

Our caseworkers have been assisting by providing training and advice to frontline volunteers, Devon County Council, Devon & Cornwall Police, NHS, amongst other statutory bodies. By upskilling those in the area, they can identify safeguarding, wellbeing or immigration concerns and raise them with the relevant authorities to step in to help. With more hotels looking to open in the region, upskilling local volunteers is essential to ensure that asylum seekers are getting the help and support they need.

Health Point

Health Point is a drop-in triage service every Tuesday with a volunteer GP and mental health professional on site. It has been running since June 2022 and has seen over 160 service users to date.

This vital service came about in response to our concern that our service users were unable to get essential healthcare and advice due to language barriers, lack of IT access and not understanding the NHS system. Health Point advises our service users on how to access healthcare, provides women's health advice, helps with GP referrals, provides a letter writing service and facilitates a service user to speak to a mental health worker.

Rosie Isaacs, a local GP advocating for making healthcare more accessible to migrants, has spearheaded the project. She said *"It has been a fantastic privilege to work alongside DCRS to support people in navigating the U.K healthcare system which can be complicated, particularly if English is not your first language. Our vision is to fully embed this vital service in our community so that refugees and asylum seekers can access the healthcare services that they need in a timely fashion and with ease. Alongside medical signposting we are developing dental support as well as access to alternative therapies. It is a very exciting time for our new service as we watch the seeds of our ideas grow into positive action."*



Case Studies



ZEa – Z was referred to us by the Asylum Seeker Mental Health Team, Livewell – He is a very quiet person who presented as very passive when we first met him. Z expressed an interest in getting out of the city and into the countryside. He said 'I would like to get away from the city'. Z has attended 90% of all our summer activities and has grown in confidence. An example of this was when went canoeing on the Dart. Z initially did not want to get into the canoe – an activity he had never done. After introducing the activity slowly and reassuring him of the safety he pushed himself and sat in the middle of one of the boats (see photo). Because of the enjoyment the SUs got from this activity we went back three weeks later to do the same. This time I could see Z was very excited and he collected an oar and stated that '[he] wanted to paddle in the front' – This movement in confidence was a big step for Z and was built up over the summer – This simple act of self-actualisation remains one of the single biggest achievements of the summer activities program. Despite Z still being a quiet member of the team, he often offers comments and jokes within the group dynamic and is often the first to join in laughing when someone cracks a joke. This movement is a fantastic result of the Livewell project.



EN – N has had a complex case over the last 8 months – He came to the DCRS in May and clearly required support from both a casework point of view and wellbeing. N is an articulate, affable and very friendly guy. He is well liked amongst the cohort and always greets everyone with a smile and handshake. N told me that 'I need routine in my life as I have so many thoughts in my head' – it was clear that despite his outward appearance he was dealing with a lot of internal conflict, not least as he is a very active father. After a recent activity N said to me that 'Thank you boss for taking us out on all these activities, otherwise I would be sitting in my room on my own not being able to do anything about my case. Being able to get out and do different things is keeping me happy'. Due to N's case, he had a long period of isolation due to the fact that he had very little funds. The activities program has not only given him a routine and his way of being is starting to change and he is a respectful, well-mannered man who is starting to grow into a leadership role – skills that will help him as he progresses with his case.



ASI – A joined our summer program alongside her two daughters (7 & 10) – A is an amazing cook and a matriarch within the group – She said to me at the beginning that 'The girls would really like to get out of the house and enjoy their summer holidays' due to the nature of the asylum process A felt she had very few options in entertaining the kids during the school break. It was a lovely dynamic having younger members join the program, they offered a different point of view, and their constant laughter was enjoyed by everyone within the group. A often brings food and treats for our outings – her baklava is amazing and she shares all her skills and passion with the rest of the group. At the end of August A told me 'These trips have been good for me and the girls and my family, we have done activities that we have never done, and the girls have learnt about things' – The girls told me they were going to draw a picture of when we went to the beach to take to school. It is these small things that mean so much to me in my role but also how we make small differences to SUs lives.



Thank you for your
ongoing support

