



Providing comfort and friendship to  
refugees and asylum seekers  
Registered Charity No. 1162226

[www.wtrrp.org.uk](http://www.wtrrp.org.uk)  
01923 252434

NEWSLETTER: AUTUMN 2015

**Please note our new  
address:**

**PO Box 2474, Watford  
WD18 1XT**

## Hold the date: our AGM

**Wednesday 17 February 2016 at 7.30 pm  
St Lukes Church, Langley Way, Watford  
WD17 3EG**

In the first AGM as a registered charity we are very pleased to announce that our visiting speaker will be Richard Harrington MP. Richard is the Home Office Minister responsible for co-ordinating and delivering the work needed across government to resettle 20,000 Syrian refugees in the UK, along with co-ordinating the provision of government support to Syrian refugees. With interest and public support in refugees at an all-time high, we hope you will be able to attend our AGM to hear about the UK's refugee situation first-hand from the updated news about our challenging and rewarding work in the Watford and Three Rivers area.

## Local drive to support refugee crisis

Across Scotland, the arrival of refugees is hitting the headlines as it prepares to take 40% of the 1,000 refugees arriving in the UK by Christmas. Crucially Scotland has been working hard at the grassroots to get fully organised for receiving the first arrivals of Syrian refugees this year. Similarly here in Watford, there is a great deal of on-the-ground community preparation. More than 200 people attended St Mary's Church on 22 September, from churches across Watford and the surrounding area, together with representatives from non-Christian faiths. All '3 Cs' (Charities, Churches and Councils) were united in their response to work together and since then, have been seamlessly working to ensure refugees arriving on these shores are welcomed as they knock at our own doors in Watford.



Similarly, Three Rivers District Council (TRDC), representing all political parties, has recently passed a Refugee Motion to do its best to assist with the Government's plan to offer support and resettlement opportunities. As part of this motion, TRDC welcomed Government assurance that it intends to fund each refugee in the scheme, in order to minimise the impact on local services, and, importantly, not take anything away from existing local authority allocations such as addressing the serious housing shortages.

A network called Herts Welcomes Syrian Families (HWSF) has also been formed. Members of this network include the Peace and Justice Group at Hertford St Andrews Church, other Christian, Muslim and Jewish faith groups, individuals and all four Amnesty Groups in Hertfordshire. HWSF is taking an active role in co-ordinating support across Hertfordshire. The Anglican and Catholic dioceses have both given their active support to this initiative.

Please come to our AGM in February, and bring your friends, to hear more from Richard on how local people and organisations are saying 'yes, we can help with refugees on the move', and how life never stands still for WTRRP and the Watford and Three Rivers area!

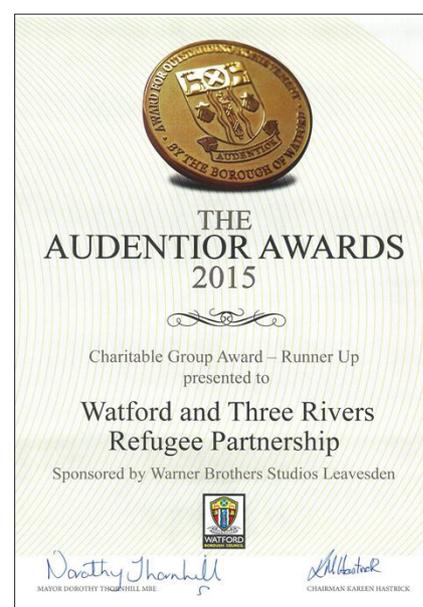
## Sign up to Gift Aid so that the Exchequer gives WTRRP a helping hand too

Now we are a registered charity, we have enrolled on the Government-run scheme Gift Aid. This allows charities like WTRRP to claim the basic rate of tax on every pound donated. To cut a long story short, it means that for every £10 donated, the Government donates £2.50 – pretty good eh? But we do need a signed declaration with your name and address if you are a UK taxpayer. If you have already donated to WTRRP, we should have sent you the form already, if not let us know and we'll send another.

## WTRRP's work acknowledged in Watford Borough's Audentior award

On 11 September, WTRRP received a tremendous boost when it received the runner up in the Charitable Group Award of Watford's 2015 Audentior civic awards. The Audentior civic awards holds an annual ceremony where the elected mayor and the chairman of the Council recognise the determined and caring nature of people and organisations that are effective in helping those in need in the local community.

Joy Hobbs, our 'very can-do' and highly experienced and effective casework co-ordinator, rightfully collected the award (a mega box of chocolates) on behalf of the organisation.



On behalf of WTRRP, casework co-ordinator, Joy Hobbs (holding on to the chocolates!), Doris Kyeremaa, ex client and now volunteer and Karen Hastick, Chairman of Watford Council, receive the runner-up award (Charitable Group Award) at the Audentior ceremony

One of the evening highlights was to watch a short film telling something about the life and work of each of the winners. Those taking part had great fun contributing to the film and if you take a look on our website [www.wtrrp.org.uk](http://www.wtrrp.org.uk) or <http://vimeo.com/138078126> there are certainly some movie stars in the making...

The huge box of chocolates had wide appeal and were soon polished off at the Drop-In-Centre by our ESOL students who are now keen to become chocoholics!

## Also in the news

Richard Howitt, MEP for East of England, was keen to listen rather than talk when he visited our Drop-In Centre on 4 September (featured in 11 September *Watford Observer*). By visiting the Drop-In Centre, Richard was able to meet a few clients, hear their stories and see first-hand how a refugee life is about survival and having somewhere and someone to turn to. It was clear that Richard's visit sparked his fervour even more to offer his support to the work of WTRRP and the refugee crisis.



Richard Howitt MEP outside the Drop-In Centre in Watford with volunteers Joy Hobbs, Jill Besant and one of our clients

## Harvest donations are lifting the roof!

Harvest is traditionally the busiest time of the year – and this year has been unprecedented with schools, churches and individuals donating increasingly large collections to us. A BIG THANK YOU! The shelves are now groaning under the weight and the storage capacity is bursting at the seams so just for a couple of months we find ourselves in the unusual situation of being unable to accept any more large donations of food. We still welcome tinned meat, tinned sponge puddings, long life milk and fruit juice.

This bumper harvest also came at the same time as we moved our storage and distribution operation to the Watford Foodbank to help us overcome the practicalities of handling an ever growing number of food parcels we are providing. We are still on a steep learning curve but despite the inevitable teething problems, there is plenty of light at the end of the tunnel. Our thanks to the Watford Foodbank and their volunteers for all their help, patience and support with this transition.

## People power is arriving at WTRRP

Over the last few months, a stream of new volunteers has begun helping out at WTRRP. Many have been moved to action by the recent refugee crisis and want to help, others have become more aware of WTRRP through our drive for more volunteers, especially to help us apply for grants and generate more financial support for what we do. Whatever the reasons and fulfilment driving our volunteer upsurge, WTRRP is immensely grateful for more helping hands as there is always plenty to do and more!

**Don't forget**

**WTRRP AGM**

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at 7.30 pm, St Lukes Church,  
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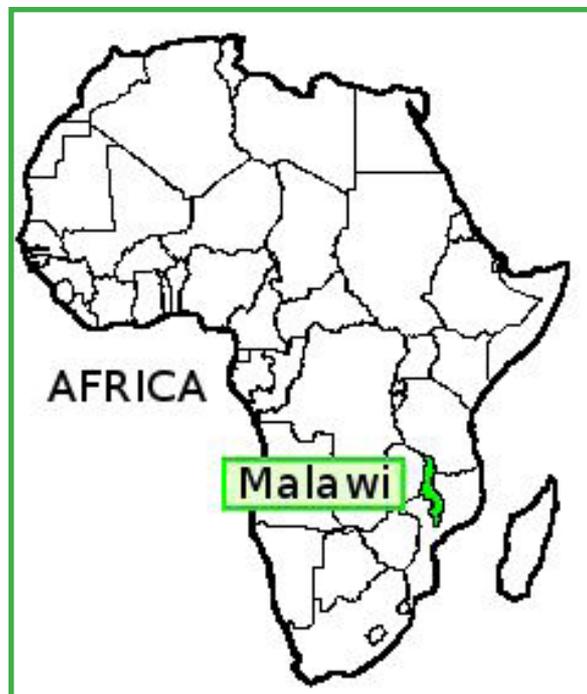
## The voice of Rebecca - her story of self-determination

Every year we help refugees and asylum seekers adjust to a new life in the UK. Here is another one of their stories that shows living for years on the margins can be turned around. Rebecca's story is truly one to rejoice.

Rebecca (not her real name) went to primary school in Malawi. But it was impossible to pursue her dream of further education there and so she came to the UK on a student visa. But things quickly went wrong when the college where she was studying folded. The Home Office took away her passport and so she could no longer study here. She found work in a care home. But life for Rebecca was tough, facing all kinds of practical and emotional difficulties as a young woman on her own in London with a young son. In the end she sent her son back to Malawi to be brought up by his grandparents.

Six years on, Rebecca was pregnant again, but now she was penniless, no longer permitted to work, and destitute but still resourceful in finding ways to keep herself going. It was then that Rebecca and her circumstances became known to WTRRP. After being helped to seek legal advice, it seemed Rebecca's only option was to return to Malawi. So WTRRP put her in touch with Refugee Action who realised she wanted desperately to stay and rebuild her life in the UK. Refugee Action helped Rebecca grasp our case law so that she, herself, could prepare and present her own cause in court. She succeeded! With a letter of support from WTRRP to take to her final interview, Rebecca now has 5 years leave to remain with access to public funds if she needs them.

Joy Hobbs, our caseworker co-ordinator recently visited Rebecca who is now living in the north where she has been given life lines by caring people and organisations along the way. She is ecstatic that she can now study again, work and provide for herself and her son.



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