



Refugee  
Survival  
Trust

# RST News Update

April 2019 to February 2020

The 18-19 Annual Review illustrates clearly the range and quality of RST's work from April 2018 to February 2019.

It's now February 2020. Things have moved on since April 2019 and it's useful to take this opportunity to bring you more up to date. There's been **a lot** going on behind the scenes ...

## We've updated our Vision and Mission statements

In January we officially adopted statements that better and more elegantly capture the underlying nature of what RST is about:

Our **Vision** is a welcoming, inclusive, safe Scotland for refugees and asylum seekers, where all live free of destitution and have the means and opportunities to realise their full potential.

Our **Mission** is to provide refugees and people seeking asylum with practical support when it is most needed, build connections between people and use what we learn to campaign for change.

## We're recruiting a CEO!

We've been **awarded £150,000 funding over three years by the Tudor Trust!** This enables us to strengthen our core infrastructure and make it fit for developing our work. The key development will be to bring in a single overall leadership role. We hope to have a CEO in place within the next few months.

## An update on RST's projects between April last year and now:

Demand for **Destitution Grants** remains high, up by around 15% in the current financial year, with possibly over 1700 grants by the end of March. The SERCO lock change evictions are a big issue at present. We gave out 165 grants to people affected by them between July and December 2019.

RST has supported people affected by the SERCO crisis by twice providing additional destitution grants to anyone served an eviction notice. Our Destitute Asylum Seeker Service (DASS) project has also accommodated one person affected by these evictions.

**DASS** is now into the second year of its second three year cycle. Referrals are up a little and we expect numbers to remain high over the coming year. We are in the midst of exciting work to plan for how we develop the various work strands of this project into next year and beyond.

Mobility is a key issue for asylum seekers and refugees and we see great demand for support with travel costs, particularly for travel around Glasgow. We secured additional funds and provided **bus tokens and vouchers** to two of our key partner organisations.

**Bumps to Babies Bus Passes** (new in 2019) have a steady demand and we are on course to give around 65 ten-week passes over the 19-20 year.

The demand for **Access to Education and Employment grants** continues at about the same level, with around 100 grants likely this year.

Our **Internship** (work experience) project continues to be popular. We currently have six new interns who started before Christmas. The scheme offers a unique opportunity for *us* to learn from refugees, and enables them to develop skills while contributing to our work in a very personal and hands on way.

Since the period documented in the Annual Review we got funding that enabled us to start a **new project**. The **Wee Welcome** parent and toddler group in Glasgow gives refugees, asylum seeker *and other parents* the chance to meet up in an inclusive, diverse multicultural group to offer peer support, particularly to refugees, to build connections in their community.

After reviewing finances and resources we chose to suspend our Glasgow Welcome befriending project and our Talks and Schools Engagement programmes in late 2019. We look forward to getting back soon to these or comparable projects; encouraging inclusion and helping to enable refugees and asylum seekers to be active citizens is an important aim for us.

### **Other developments in the organisation**

There have been some **changes in staff**, as is common for an organisation of our size. At Christmas we sadly said goodbye to RST's hard-working Coordinator since 2016, who decided it was time for fresh challenges elsewhere. We're very grateful for her dedication and commitment to RST.

In late 2019 we contracted an **Interim Executive**, to guide the organisation through a time of transition until a CEO starts. She hit the ground running, building on her previous work as a volunteer management consultant to RST from the Cranfield Trust.

There has been some significant **renewal in the Board** in the last year, with a change of Chair and some trustees as part of a natural turnover as people's circumstances change. Trustees were recruited for a variety of skills and experience to strengthen governance in response to RST's growth and the complex environment in which we work. We're recruiting again; see [our advert on Reach Volunteering](#) if you're interested or know someone suitable.

We've done a lot of **work on our finance systems**, moving to **professional accounting software**, and making changes to model and forecast more clearly. Among other things, this gave the detail needed to get Tudor Trust funding and puts us in a better place for future applications and audits.

We're reviewing and refining overall strategy and we've **updated our Aims** as well as the vision and mission statements. We've re-affirmed that RST should '**focus particularly on contributing to the prevention and alleviation of destitution** among asylum seekers and refugees by meeting basic needs.' However, **all** our Aims remain very important to us (they also cover increasing opportunities for active involvement in society, contributing to policy and good practice and raising public awareness / campaigning for a better asylum system).

### **Strategy for the future is an essential consideration**

In late 2018 we secured a further three years funding for our DASS project. However, we're already halfway through that and as by far the largest of our projects it means that **we have to be very careful in considering our long-term strategy both in relation to DASS as a project, and for our Destitution work in general**. We're looking at this now, thinking ahead a year or more, focusing on our interests in accommodation and support of destitute asylum seekers, while considering overall strategy and related developments in the wider sector. The Interim Executive, and the forthcoming CEO, are key to this fundamentally important process in guiding the future of RST's work.

### None of RST's work happens without money: about **Fundraising**

Raising the funds is always a challenge, but thanks to the efforts and generous assistance of many people and organisations, we've been getting through OK. Generous funding over three years from a corporate donor allowed us to take on a dedicated fundraiser at the end of 2018, which has been a great boon.

We want to thank everyone who donates – both anonymously and named: from school children running a classroom bake-sale to major donors, to individuals who've given from the early days of RST. We have a lot of support from very diverse communities in Scotland, in England and abroad.

Fundraising will of course always be a major focus. The fantastic grant from the Tudor Trust allows us to make some important changes, but it doesn't enable us to do everything we'd like. Indeed, we have further plans to strengthen our core operations, and **we will be seeking additional core funding in the near future** to complete the package of improvements.

DASS is a big project, with a fantastic and committed funder in the Oak Foundation, but they only fund 50% of the budget. We're working hard **to ensure adequate match funding** is found to complete the package.

And, of course, as the demands for our grants and bus passes increases, we always need to **work hard to ensure we have sufficient grants funds available**.

### Conclusion

Thanks again for your ongoing interest and involvement in RST's work. It's a difficult sector to work in and there are many challenges at many levels, from the personal to the organisational and from the financial to the political.

Sometimes something happens to remind us all it's all worthwhile. We were absolutely thrilled in January to receive a significant anonymous donation of more than £5,000. The accompanying message was 'You are great people, be strong, keep fighting oppression and keep optimistic'. To which we can only say thank you, we try our best, and we will.

We're all excited by the opportunities ahead of us, and seek not to be daunted by the challenges. We hope you feel that too.

**All** of us involved with RST are driven by the desire to make things better for a group of the most vulnerable and unreasonably ill-treated people in society, as we work towards seeing the Vision of RST fulfilled:

A welcoming, inclusive, safe Scotland for refugees and asylum seekers, where all live free of destitution and have the means and opportunities to realise their full potential.

Let's all keep working towards that, and keep optimistic that we see it become reality.

Best wishes,



Mick Patrick  
Chair of Trustees