Annual Review 2013/14
How we welcomed asylum seekers, refugees and detainees
Our members and supporters, of various faiths and politics, have shared values based on a common humanity and social justice.

Our work is to reduce poverty, suffering and social isolation and to enable asylum seekers and refugees to live with the respect and dignity to which they are entitled.

Asylum Welcome exists for people fleeing persecution and danger in their own countries, who seek refuge in Oxfordshire.

To these ends, we:

- provide advice, information and support to asylum seekers and refugees;
- befriend, visit and support the rights and welfare of detainees; and
- work with other service providers and the public to meet the needs of asylum seekers and refugees.

We make every effort to inform and influence public debate and to dispel myths and misinformation about asylum seekers and refugees. We aim for the highest standards of integrity, confidentiality and quality of service; to make no judgements of individuals and to meet the needs left unmet by others.

The Trustee Board 2013-14

In addition to their governance responsibilities many of our trustees take part in practical volunteering activities.

Trustees throughout the year:
John Prangley Chair
Marcus Thompson MBE Deputy Chair
Ray Horne Treasurer
Dr. Melanie Griffiths
Tamsin Smith
Richard Taylor
Professor Lucy Vickers
Professor Roger Zetter

Trustees who retired at the AGM:
Stephanie Kitchen
Abdul Qadeer Khan
James Souter
Heather Steele
Nikki Van der Gaag

New trustees recruited at the AGM:
Duncan Bain
Judy Boon
Belinda Cootes
Wyon Stansfeld

Company Secretary:
Olive Gearing

Patrons:
Terry Ranger
Uwe Kitzinger

Asylum Welcome Members

By the end of 2013-14 Asylum Welcome’s membership reached 200. The experience and opinions of the members guide the organisation and strengthen our links with local communities. About 80 people attended the Annual General Meeting at which members voted in new trustees. In 2013 we reduced administration by introducing a fixed membership renewal date of July 1st.
From the Chair

Last March we said farewell to our Chair Richard Taylor, after eight years of dedication and hard work, carried out with grace and wisdom. As Vice Chair I stepped into the Chair’s role from April 2013 to June 2014. After a busy and rewarding year I welcome the appointment of Bob Wilkes as my successor.

Our trustees and staff work selflessly to provide oversight and co-ordination to our wide range of highly valued services, but it is the community of 120 volunteers who are the life-force of Asylum Welcome and it is largely thanks to them that our services continue. I have been an Asylum Welcome volunteer for a long time and have seen first hand the important practical assistance that volunteers provide to asylum seekers, refugees and detainees. During my year as Chair, I saw a different aspect of the extraordinary support that local people provide: in response to our fundraising efforts, in particular an appeal in the Summer, I was deeply touched by the incredibly generous donations from members and other supporters who wanted to see our work continue. Heartfelt thanks to you all.

John Prangley
Acting Chair of Trustees 2013-14

From the Director

In 2013-14 Asylum Welcome was refreshed by new faces, new ideas and even a coat of colourful paint. It was also a year in which Asylum Welcome demonstrated that its strength lies in the long-standing loyalty of its volunteers and supporters in the local community, and their shared belief in the imperative to respond to asylum seekers, refugees and detainees with welcome.

Through the combined endeavours of trustees, staff, volunteers, members, donors, partners and other supporters, much was achieved:

- **We conveyed welcome** in a tangible way through services like hot lunches.
- **We responded to needs** by enabling access to legal rights and statutory services when asylum seekers, refugees and detainees found it difficult to negotiate for themselves.
- **We were able to help** some people to build independent lives in Oxford, while others we supported through periods of uncertainty and distress.

With your help, we look forward to continuing to provide welcome. Thank you for showing your support for our work.

Kate Smart
Director
A Welcoming Centre

Volunteers, staff, trustees and clients worked together on a shoe-string budget to make the Asylum Welcome offices more attractive and useful.

We wanted the offices to reflect our welcoming values, so we:

- **Introduced more colour** by painting the space and putting up pictures and hangings. Made a children’s corner with soft floor cushions and toys. Filled the window sills with plants.

- **Constructed two large notice boards** to help clients share information with each other and to inform them about local amenities. Notices were no longer spread around the building so the place looked less ‘official’. We also set up new tables and chairs, drink-making facilities and a CD player to encourage sitting, reading, writing and chatting.

- **Created a designated computer area** for clients to use.

- **Created a meeting room** so that it is easier to hold group discussions with internal and external partners.

- **Introduced a ‘Suggestions Box’** for clients to give us feedback on our services.

- **Redesigned the database** holding information about our activities on behalf of clients.

296 visits to make an appointment, use the phone, collect post or to socialise

113 visits to use computers

Painting the reception area to make it look more welcoming and less ‘official’

New notice boards and pictures make the space more attractive and useful
Partnerships

Asylum Welcome works hard to develop close working partnerships to support its services, respond to political changes and improve outcomes for asylum seekers, refugees and detainees.

Examples of our partnership work in 2013-14 are:

- **Partnership agreements** with the Children’s Society, Key 2 Housing Association, the Oxford Food Bank, the Red Cross and the Terrence Higgins Trust.

- **Membership** of the OAAST partnership (Oxford Advice Agencies Stronger Together) – a new initiative bringing together advice agencies in Oxford to improve efficiency; membership of the Association of Visitors to Immigration Detainees; and Membership of the Thames Valley Strategic Migration Group.

- **Regular and productive meetings** with Refugee Resource, MIND, Medical Justice, COMPAS, Bail for Immigration detainees, St Francis House, the Refugee Council and Reading Refugee Support Group.

During August 2013 Asylum Welcome hosted a group of 30 young people taking part in the **UK National Citizen’s Service** programme. The 16 and 17 year olds visited the offices to find out more about asylum seekers and refugees, helped prepare and serve the hot lunch and, in the following week, fundraised for Asylum Welcome.
Food Services

We have maintained a food bank service for many years, as a practical means of conveying welcome, and in order to prevent destitution. In 2013-14 food donations were very generous, especially during the harvest festival season, but there was still pressure to meet demand: food was ‘flying off the shelves’.

Asylum Welcome is grateful to the Oxford Food Bank for donations of fresh food three times a week and this year we purchased a fridge-freezer to keep food fresh.

A tightly-knit group of committed volunteers cooked and served hot meals at Wednesday lunchtime throughout the year. The volunteers who prepare the meals adapted the menus according to feedback from clients, and they have been touched by the gratitude they have received.

- In 2013-14 we asked volunteers working in our advice services to encourage their clients to take advantage of the hot lunch while waiting for their problems to be resolved – this has increased the number of women with small children who share a meal.
- We also introduced take-away boxes which has reduced wastage of leftovers and allows our clients to take an extra meal.

Over the year, we received 130 food donations, each ranging from one to 10 bags.

Thank you!
Advice Service

Information and Signposting

The ‘Information and Signposting’ advice service remained challenging and busy, providing advice on a wide range of topics.

Typical areas of advice required were accessing asylum support payments, transferring to welfare benefits, finding accommodation, and accessing health services. Our volunteers helped with form filling, letter writing and negotiating on the telephone.

We provided practical help to enable people to integrate and rebuild their lives in Oxford – we paid for someone to buy equipment needed to start a job, we paid for another who needed glasses, and we arranged a second hand bicycle for another to get to college.

We also helped refused asylum seekers who do not have the capacity or legal representation to pursue their asylum claim nor a desire to return to their own country. We are especially concerned about women who have given birth after being refused asylum and whose right to support from either the Home Office or Social Services is disputed. We gave them food and advice, and advocated on their behalf.

Case study

A Syrian torture survivor claimed asylum at the Home Office centre in Liverpool, was granted asylum within 2 weeks, then moved to Oxford where he found work to support himself and his family. About 8 months later he went into hospital and thereby lost his job and accommodation. When he applied to the City Council for help to find accommodation he was told his ‘local connection’ was to Liverpool, not Oxford. Asylum Welcome presented his case to Oxford councillors, the decision was overturned and the family was supported to remain in Oxford.

Volunteers make calls, write letters and negotiate on the phone on behalf of asylum seekers, refugees and detainees

Adult asylum seekers and refugees given advice and information
Youth Service

Our youth service is vital for children who arrive in Oxford without parents.

In 2013-14 our social worker ran orientation sessions, in partnership with the Children’s Society, for new arrivals. She provided advice and support at our evening youth club and at our office.

At the club we increased the food provided, as the young people enjoy eating a good hot meal together. We ran sessions on online safety when using Facebook, instant messaging and Skype. The Terrence Higgins Trust provided health advice.

Young people sought our help with complex and distressing issues: in the last year no young person from Afghanistan, Iraq or Iran received refugee status. Several young people, assessed to be adults, maintain that they are under 18 years old.

These pressures, combined with the lack of family, led many young people to suffer mental health problems and even attempt suicide. Asylum Welcome responded by listening, negotiating and securing services where possible.

We also responded to the positive aspirations of young people – some visited the Ashmolean Museum and several were helped to pursue qualifications. For those turning 18 we worked to find landlords willing to rent to foreign young care-leavers.

Case study

One of the youth project’s teenagers, an individual suffering the mental impact of a very difficult past, has begun to volunteer for Asylum Welcome, helping with carpentry and painting. This has had a tremendously positive effect, giving him a sense of involvement and some new skills.
Education Service

“Attendance at lessons has been regular and enthusiastic”

Education, whether it involves learning English, IT, or any other subject, plays an important role in building confidence and self-esteem, increasing skills, broadening horizons, and encouraging integration.

In 2013-14 our Education Advice volunteers secured places for asylum seekers and refugees on various courses offered by: FELLOW, EMBS, Crisis Skylight, Ruskin College, Oxon adult education classes, City of Oxford College and Oxford Brookes University. Asylum Welcome funded bus passes to get to these locations.

Our volunteers continued to deliver one-to-one English lessons and one participant has achieved the level of English necessary to take the IELTS examination.

Asylum Welcome paid tribute to Jean Kaye, who passed away in 2013. Jean ran our education service for many years and made a difference to the lives of hundreds of asylum seekers and refugees.

Case study

A gentleman from Rwanda who has been refused asylum but is still pursuing his asylum case was referred to, and successfully completed, a free course in English for Work and IT. Asylum Welcome supported him by paying for a monthly bus pass to travel to the course and by the loan of a laptop to enable him to complete homework. He is now a volunteer IT teaching assistant at Crisis Skylight and has been accepted by the Red Cross for training for voluntary work, after which he intends to start a carers’ course.
Detainee Support Service

For 20 years Asylum Welcome has co-ordinated and supported a network of visitors to detainees at Campsfield House.

In October 2013 a major fire in Campsfield seriously damaged and put one accommodation block out of use. As soon as news of the fire was made public, our visitors acted swiftly to determine what had happened to the detainees and to support them accordingly.

Throughout 2013-14 our Detainee Support Service continued to offer advice at the end of the telephone to detainees, and to provide practical assistance such as re-uniting detainees with their belongings. Detainees found it difficult to maintain regular contact with a lawyer from inside detention, so we spent a great deal of time in discussion with lawyers about individual cases.

We have also played an important role in strategic discussions about detainee support:

- Asylum Welcome worked constructively with the authorities at Campsfield during 2013-14 and attended several meetings with the senior managers. This enabled us to raise issues of concern to the detainees, such as access to legal representatives and mobile phone usage.

- In January 2014 Asylum Welcome organised a round-table meeting of local agencies who provide a service in Campsfield, to share information and discuss common concerns. Attendees included Medical Justice, Refugee Action and Bail for Immigration Detainees.
Refugee Rights Support Fund

In 2013-14 we began a new initiative to help asylum seekers, refugees and detainees to exercise their legal rights. Dozens benefited from small cash payments, for example to travel to Home Office appointments or to post copies of legal documents.

We funded partnership work with reputable lawyers, where a little additional funding could make a difference to an application to remain in the UK.

We made available approximately £100 a month to pay for phone credit to help detainees to contact their families and their legal representatives.

Case study

A gentleman from Uganda claimed asylum in 2007 and was refused, but was fearful of returning to his own country. After being in the UK for several years, with three children here, he missed out on consideration for leave to remain during the Home Office’s large-scale backlog clearing exercise (2008-2010) due to a prison record. Otherwise law-abiding, he had been working illegally to support his family. Asylum Welcome worked in partnership with local solicitors, and contributed £500 to appeal his case on human rights grounds. The appeal was successful and he was granted leave to remain.

Using our influence

Asylum Welcome benefits from proximity to a world-class university. In 2013-14 we contributed to several academic research projects that improve our understanding of how best to support asylum seekers, refugees and detainees. Our experience, expertise and reputation means that we have an influential voice in local and national debates about policy and practice. For example:

- We made a written submission to the government consultation on legal aid changes, and sent letters to Oxford MPs about the impact of the proposal.
- We also made a written submission to the government consultation on limiting access to healthcare for migrants, including refused asylum seekers.
- With Refugee Resource, we sent a letter to Oxford City Councillors about their response to destitute asylum seekers.
Promoting understanding

Asylum Welcome has a strong track-record of organising public events to promote understanding of the experiences of asylum seekers, refugees and detainees.

We organised or gave presentations at the following events:

- An evening of performances, including the theatre group Ice and Fire, organised in partnership with Crisis Skylight Oxford at the Old Fire Station.
- Film showing and discussion of *I am Nasrine* at the Ultimate Picture Palace.
- Presentations in support of Asylum Welcome’s Seasonal Appeal, including a key-note presentation by Dame Helena Kennedy QC at Oxford Brookes University.
- Speakers Panel at OxDox film showing *The Stop Over*, at the Ultimate Picture Palace.
- Speakers Panel at a discussion about asylum at Oxford University’s Wadham College.
- A stall at the Oxfam One World Fair, Oxford Town Hall.
- Presentations at an event preceding the performance of *Refugee Boy* at the Oxford Playhouse theatre.

We also kept in touch with volunteers through an informal weekly bulletin and with members via a quarterly newsletter.
Our funders

Without our donors and funders, we simply would not be here.

In 2013-14 we increased the pace of applications for trust-fund grants and approached a more diverse range of funding sources. We sub-let some office space for evening classes to increase our income without disrupting our services. Our Chair issued an appeal letter to supporters in the Summer and we held our traditional Seasonal Appeal in November. Thanks to the sustained hard work of staff and trustees and with incredible generosity from our supporters, we not only raised sufficient funds to remain open in 2013-14 but also secured a substantial proportion of the funding needed for 2014-15.

Our donors are too numerous to mention here, but we most sincerely appreciate all those who have supported us financially, especially the many local individuals who contribute by standing order. We also gratefully acknowledge donations in kind, such as food and other useful items.

We are thankful to have received major grants and donations from the following, some of whom have supported us for many years:

AB Charitable Trust
Advice Services Transition Fund
All Souls College, Oxford University
AW.60 Charitable Trust
Bishop of Oxford’s Outreach Fund
Chaplain and Choir of New College, Oxford University
Dr Iain McLean
Eynsham Baptist Church
H.L.J.Brunner Settlement
Holy Trinity Church, Headington Quarry PCC
J Paul Getty Jnr Charitable Trust
Key 2 Futures
LankellyChase Foundation
Layton Hill Trust
Lloyds TSB – Foundation for England and Wales
Lord Mayor’s Charity
Mark Haddon
Odin Charitable Trust
OXFAP
Oxford City Council
Oxfordshire Community Foundation
Oxford Council of Faiths
Oxfordshire County Council (Chill Out Fund)
Oxford Hazard Management
Oxford Quakers
Pye Charitable Settlement
Red Cross
St Andrew’s Church PCC
St Mary’s Church Iffley
St Michael’s & All Saints Charities
The Beatrice Laing Trust
The Big Society Fund
(with thanks to Councillor David Williams)
The Esmee Fairbairn Foundation
The Leigh Trust
The Mactaggart Third Fund
And individuals who wish to remain anonymous
Statement of financial activities for the year ended 31 March 2014

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<tr>
<th>2014</th>
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<th>2014</th>
<th>2013</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Unrestricted Funds</td>
<td>Restricted Funds</td>
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<td>Funds</td>
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<td>£</td>
<td>£</td>
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<td><strong>INCOMING RESOURCES</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Incoming Resources from Generated Funds</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Voluntary Income</td>
<td>148,237</td>
<td>47,523</td>
<td>195,760</td>
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<td>Activities for Generating Funds</td>
<td>3,878</td>
<td>3,878</td>
<td>2,606</td>
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<tr>
<td>Investment Income</td>
<td>215</td>
<td>215</td>
<td>154</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Other Incoming Resources</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total Incoming Resources</strong></td>
<td>152,330</td>
<td>47,523</td>
<td>199,853</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>RESOURCES EXPENDED</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Costs of Generating Funds</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Costs of Generating Voluntary Income</td>
<td>16,937</td>
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<td>16,937</td>
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<tr>
<td>Charitable Activities</td>
<td>113,607</td>
<td>56,613</td>
<td>170,220</td>
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<td>Governance Costs</td>
<td>6,422</td>
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<td><strong>Total Resources Expended</strong></td>
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<td>56,613</td>
<td>193,579</td>
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<td><strong>Net Incoming/ (Outgoing) Resources</strong></td>
<td>15,364</td>
<td>(9,090)</td>
<td>6,274</td>
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<td><strong>Transfer between Funds</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
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<td><strong>Funds Brought Forward April 1 2013</strong></td>
<td>40,727</td>
<td>9,090</td>
<td>49,817</td>
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<td><strong>Total Funds Carried Forward 31 March 2014</strong></td>
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<td>£0</td>
<td>£56,091</td>
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Balance Sheet as at March 31 2014

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<tr>
<th>2014</th>
<th>2013</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>£</td>
<td>£</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Fixed Assets</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Office Equipment</td>
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<td><strong>Current Assets</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Debtors</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cash on Deposit</td>
<td>87,557</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cash at bank and in Hand</td>
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<td><strong>Total Current Assets</strong></td>
<td>105,111</td>
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<td><strong>Current Liabilities</strong></td>
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<td>Creditors: Falling due within one year</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Net Current Assets</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Creditors: Amounts falling due after more than one year</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total Assets</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Represented by:</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Unrestricted Income Funds</strong></td>
<td>56,091</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Restricted Income Funds</strong></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>£56,091</strong></td>
<td><strong>£49,817</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Our volunteers

Asylum Welcome is essentially a volunteer-run organisation (with only one full-time and five part-time staff for most of 2013-14). It has an incredibly loyal network of volunteers. Throughout 2013-14 volunteer numbers remained steady at just over 100, ending the year at 120. A considerable number of our volunteers have been with the organization for over ten years, some since it began twenty years ago, and there are always new recruits. Friendship among the volunteers helps to maintain their interest in spending time at Asylum Welcome. Their achievements are phenomenal.
I’d like to support Asylum Welcome

I would like to donate: £

MY DETAILS

Name:
Address:
Postcode:
Email:
Telephone:
Date:

I’d like to support Asylum Welcome regularly by standing order:

Please speak to your bank, and give them our bank details:

Asylum Welcome
Account number: 65026773
Sort code: 08-92-50
Co-operative Bank plc, Salford M5 2QP

I’d like to be a member of Asylum Welcome:

[ ] Please tick here, complete the contact details above, sign below, and please ensure your donation/standing order is at least equal to the membership fee.

Membership fee: £20 individual
£6 volunteer/senior citizen/unwaged
Free for service users

Signature:

I’d like Asylum Welcome to claim Gift Aid on my donation:

Please treat as Gift Aid donations all qualifying gifts of money made [ ] today [ ] in the past 4 years [ ] in the future (Please tick all boxes you wish to apply). I confirm I have paid or will pay an amount of Income Tax and/or Capital Gains Tax for each tax year (6 April to 5 April) that is at least equal to the amount of tax that all the charities or Community Amateur Sports Clubs that I donate to will reclaim on my gifts for that tax year. I understand that other taxes such as VAT and Council Tax do not qualify. I understand the charity will reclaim 25p of tax on every £1 that I give on or after 6 April 2008.

Signature

Thank you very much!

Please return this form to:
Membership Secretary, Asylum Welcome, Unit 7, Newtec Place, Magdalen Road, Oxford OX4 1RE

Asylum Welcome is a registered charity, number 1092265, and company number 4361627.

You can help

Asylum Welcome fundraises in all kinds of ways…

Staff and volunteers took part in fundraising events throughout the year, including:

• Cake sale
• Belly-dancing event
• Sponsored half-marathon
• Online auction
• Book sale, which led to a year-round bookshelf selling second hand books
• Stall at Oxfam House to advertise our food bank

Please consider supporting Asylum Welcome today