



**Fresh  
Beginnings**

Migrant & Refugee Support Centre

**EUROPEAN  
CONFERENCE  
IN IPSWICH  
UK**

# History of FB

Fresh Beginnings (FB) Migrant and Refugee Support Centre emerged out of Action- in-Communities (A-I-C) project based in Bromley/London, to support refugees from UNHCR camps to integrate into UK, 2008-2011. The Colchester branch of Action In Communities was closed at the end of 2011 as the Home Office funding came to an end.

With the encouragement of Colchester Borough Council and other partners (individuals, charities, churches, CCVS: Colchester Community Voluntary Services) and experience of **Dr Enoch Kunarajah**, **Eileen Elks** and **Patrick Ramazani**, we decided to continue the work in Colchester and we set up Fresh Beginnings in 2011. Enoch and Eileen later moved on and Patrick remained the head of the project.



Patrick R

Dr Enoch



Eileen E



# Scheme/System

## •Gateway Protection Program:

Legal route for resettlement of refugees in the UK from refugee camps.

## •Afghanistan Locally Employed Staff Ex-Gratia Scheme

On 4 June 2013, the Secretary of State for Defense announced the UK will look to receive frontline locally employed Afghan interpreters whose life is in danger once British Army withdrawal from Afghanistan. It was estimated 600 interpreters and their families eligible for resettlement.

## •Syrian VPR(Vulnerable Person Resettlement):

Scheme to respond to Syrian crisis and intends to resettle up to 20,000 Syrians in need of protection from refugee camps.

## Clients

We are serving more than 200 people from different parts of the world

- 55 Afghan translators/Interpreters,
- 75 Ghurkha
- 5 families of Syrians VPR(22 people)
- Congolese 5 families
- 9 Iraqi families
- Other nationalities: Italians, Spanish, Sri Lanka, French, Chinese,...



## Services

- Advocacy/advice
- Benefits: Job seeker allowance, Child benefit, tax credit, housing benefit,
- Passports: filling the forms
- Driving license, assessments forms, appeals, tribunal hearings/appeals,
- Employment and self employment,
- Education, tenancy agreements, work related issues
- Provided Integration Through Language Classes (functional skills) and
- Computer classes.

## **Partners/Funders**

- Home Office
- Colchester Borough Council
- Essex Fairway Trust, Essex Community Foundation, Big Lottery(Award for all), Colchester Borough Homes, Colchester Boiler Room, and churches, Grass roots, .

## How we got here ?

- For Iraqi interpreters and Congolese refugee from Uganda refugee Camp, it was under Home Office Programme: "Gateway Protection Programme" through our previous charity Action In Communities
- For Afghan translators: Being part of Essex Migrant Multi-Agency, we informed by EELGA about EX-Gratia news in 2013. We had built a good relationship with our local council and organisations such Jobcentre, Police and education
- For Syrian VPR(vulnerable person resettlement), last December 2015, because of well established migrant work, the council approached Fresh Beginnings receive the first group of Syrian refugees. In December 2015, five families arrived, this was the first group to be resettled in east of England

## **Fresh Beginnings' Staff**

- Colleague who have worked in school settings, adult teaching,
- Police and medical background
- Human rights qualified staff.
- Occupational therapist to assess clients potential needs.
- Amazing team of over 55 volunteers (British and International) who teach English, help in the office, and act as befrienders. They also speak Arabic, French, Spanish, Swahili,

## **INTEGRATION MODEL**

**PROVIDE A WARM WELCOME TO NEW PEOPLE IN OUR AREA**

Three(3) Important areas of Integration Model

1. Each refugee family or individual are linked to a group of befrienders who are trained by Fresh Beginnings. The role of a befriender

- Be a 'new neighbour' to the family.
- introducing the new culture
- Introduction to new home
- explaining any unfamiliar appliances
- Show families local area, halal shops, supermarkets, bargain shops,
- Show family where to access local amenities such as library, sports facilities
- advise FB staff of minor house maintenance issues
- Liaise with Fresh Beginnings on a regular basis

2. Orientation Package: Our staff (case worker) will run sessions on:

- Prevent crime: Police
- British Culture
- Benefit Process (JSA/ESA/Housing Benefit/Child benefit/Child Tax credit/disability allowance...
- Rights and responsibilities
- Budgeting, education, employment, health system, and most importantly English

### 3. Integration Through Language and Information Computer and Technology





## **Success of the project**

- The mutual friendships between the befriender and families that still continues even after 5 years!
- 75% of clients are employed, trained
- Our Iraqi families have become British Citizens
- Some actually are now in the FB staff team
- Be part of the local community



## **Difficulties/ Challenge**

Lack of enough information about clients past especially medical issues can hinder their smooth resettlement.

Clients have high expectations about work and finding work that matches their qualifications is hard.

Struggling to adapt to British culture and weather!

5% of our client are in ESA: Employment Support Allowance

# Visit of different authorities and partners



High Sheriff of Essex: Mr Vincent Thompson



Green Part Leader  
Natalie Bennett MP

# 'Colchester's refugee scheme is impressive'

By DEAN JENNINGS

COLCHESTER residents should be praised for their tolerance and acceptance, according to a leading Labour MP.

Sir Keir Starmer, MP for Holburn and St Pauls, was in the town on the local election campaign trail.

The former director of public relations was meeting representatives of the five refugee charities recently helped to secure accommodation by Colchester Council.

His visit to charity Fresh Beginnings, in Whitford Road, is part of an UK-wide tour to find out people's attitudes towards homelessness and refugees.

He said: "The initiative programme for localities here in Colchester is very impressive."

"We're seeing this programme work in Colchester and it is a fantastic project and, very importantly, it has been well received by the people of Colchester who are welcoming and tolerant."

"The issue of immigration and refugees has become an people's priority issue partly because of the EU debate and partly because of the movement."

Sir Keir admitted Labour has historically "waited past the immigration front" but said the party now wants to be "on the front foot".

On his party's local representatives, he said: "They are doing an amazing job and it's great to see a lot of good work is going on."

"The houses will be housing, transport infrastructure and people trying to make each other."



Impressed - Sir Keir Starmer, Labour MP for Holburn and St Pauls

The Young, leader of the Colchester Labour Party said: "It's a real joy to have someone of Sir Keir's stature here in Colchester and it shows how seriously we are taking these elections."

The UK was one of only six wealthy nations to hit the UN target and target last year as some governments diverted cash to deal with the coronavirus crisis, new figures have shown.

Coming second only to the US in the total amount donated, the UK gave a larger proportion of its wealth to aid than other developed

countries, according to the latest survey by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development.

"The news was seen with criticism from some Conservatives who said Britain gave "more than our fair share" to sufficient programmes of funded by them.

Jones Conery, MP for Braintree, criticised the "arbitrary" 67 per cent target as many rich nations had failed to reach.

He said: "This shows an extraordinary, like no other other areas, the UK plays by the rules when other countries do not."

That's the verdict of leading Labour politician Sir Keir Starmer, who described residents as 'tolerant and welcoming' during visit to Fresh Beginnings charity

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Bringing some light into refugees' lives

Keir Starmer Labour MP

# Richard Howitt MEP

**Gazette**  
**COMMENT**  
**We must help the world's helpless**

**E**VERY day we hear of thousands of refugees fleeing their lives in the hope of finding a better life. They have lost their families, homes, everything they have ever known - in some way or persecution.

Many countries in Europe do not welcome the numbers of refugees who are being driven to the back of a lorry.

"The world does not know to deal with this crisis. Are they refugees or migrants? And are we British subjects, or members of humanity?"

Some say Britain is full already and has its own issues of deprivation. They say we cannot afford to take in more people who are refugees and a replacement of security will very much be lost.

However, in Britain, we have a social system which, to start at least, says people should not starve or be without shelter. We do not live in fear of being shot and we enjoy freedom and free speech.

Interpreter Muhammad, who worked with the British forces in Afghanistan, has been given

## Refugees seeking



■ Grouping meet at last - Muhammad with MEP Richard Howitt, left, Julie Bishop and Patrick Markey, Tom Ffran Brynning, Colchester  
Picture: STEVE ARGENT (01708 300000)

By WENDY SHAWING  
www.independent.co.uk

WITH our lungs, the public perception of the Syrian refugee crisis changed

### Mohammad was a schoolteacher, but fearing the Taliban he became an interpreter for the British Army. His life remains in danger



# Good time with Families





2015/04/23





