

# CANDIDATE INFORMATION PACK

Refugee Action Trustee 2017



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## Letter from the Chair

### Dear Candidate

Thank you for your interest in the work of Refugee Action and in the roles of treasurer and lead trustee on advice services.

Trustees are an incredibly important part of our charity. I joined Refugee Action as board chair in September 2016, at a time of great change for refugees and for Refugee Action. The organisation is making a substantial contribution to improving the lives of asylum seekers and refugees in the UK, and has an ambitious plan to achieve more for the next few years. The board has vital roles in overseeing and supporting our progress against the goals we have set.

We are now recruiting for two additional trustees to strengthen the board at this crucial time. We wish to recruit a Treasurer, who has experience of working in a senior financial role and can advise and guide the board in financial management. We are also seeking to recruit a trustee with expertise in advice services to provide guidance and support to our vital work in this area.

Everyone at Refugee Action, the staff, the volunteers and the Board of Trustees, believes that we have a responsibility to help people who've escaped the most appalling circumstances to live again.

We help people find the support *everyone* deserves if they're to live with dignity. We work with others to challenge the policies and practices that endanger the rights and needs of asylum seekers and refugees, as we have done recently through our successful campaign for increased English language classes for refugees. Through our services, we provide support to asylum seekers and to resettled refugees who have suffered the unimaginable. Our good practice and partnerships team also does vital work to support and strengthen other organisations in the UK supporting asylum seekers and refugees.

We recognise that there are many challenges facing asylum seekers and refugees in the UK. But we believe that there remains strong public support for making the UK a safe haven in which the rights of refugees are properly recognised and respected.

We are excited about developing innovative new services and influencing strategies to deliver the practical changes and support needed by asylum seekers and refugees in the UK.

If you believe in this as much as we do, we would love to hear from you.

**Penny Lawrence**  
**Chair of the Board of Trustees**

## About Refugee Action

### Our history

For more than 30 years Refugee Action's been passionately fighting the poverty and injustice caused by the asylum system in the UK. Founded in 1981, we developed the first model resettlement programmes in the UK, initially with refugees from Vietnam, Bosnia and Kosovo.

We expanded to work with all refugees and asylum seekers in various projects and programmes including work in reception, advice, integration and voluntary return. We are a charity resolutely independent in our actions and values even when drawing on Government grants.

We have developed an ambitious strategy for increased impact in 2016-19 and beyond.

### Our vision

Every refugee seeking sanctuary in the UK will be able to live, not just survive.

### Our mission

When someone arrives here with nothing, we make sure they have the basic support they need. Then we help them find the resources to build a new life and make a positive contribution.

We help them live. If government policies don't give them a fair chance to do that, we challenge them.

## Our work

Refugee Action's 2016-19 strategy commits us to clear objectives for impact through direct service provision, support to other organisations, and campaigns and advocacy. Our eight external goals are as follows:

### Justice

1. Secure support for most new asylum-seekers so that they can focus on their asylum case and get protection where it is needed.
2. Secure a significant increase in the quantity and quality of legal advice available to refused asylum-seekers so that those who need protection get it.

### Freedom from poverty

3. Reduce the levels of homelessness and precarious housing among people failed by the asylum system.
4. Ensure that refugees and other migrants settling in the UK are able to avoid poverty and to thrive, in particular through employment, avoiding debt, good health and positive relationships with host communities.
5. Ensure that refugees resettled in the UK are empowered to rebuild their lives successfully.

### Campaigns and Influence

6. Persuade the UK government to provide safe and legal routes for 100,000 refugees by 2020, through campaigns that reflect our experience of best practice.
7. Ensure fairer asylum decisions by securing tangible improvements to the system; and defend the rights of asylum seekers and refugees to rebuild their lives in Britain without falling into poverty.
8. Build a strong and committed campaigns supporter base of at least 50,000 people; and work with a broad range of 'unusual' allies to engage up to 2 million people in campaigning to make Britain a country that respects the rights of refugees.

## Structure, governance and management

Refugee Action's trustees are responsible for the overall management of the charity. Biographical details of our trustees can be seen on our website: <http://www.refugee-action.org.uk/about/our-team/>

The Chief Executive, Stephen Hale, was appointed by the trustees in 2015 and is accountable to them for managing the charity as a whole. He is in turn advised by a Senior Management Team (SMT).

The SMT is assisted by a staff team that comprises around 120 staff who, with the help of more than 400 volunteers, deliver services across the UK primarily from offices in London, Birmingham and elsewhere in the West Midlands, Bradford, and Manchester and elsewhere in the North-West.

## **Funding**

Refugee Action's board of Trustees has approved a three year budget for Refugee Action, to accompany our 2016-19 strategy. A core priority for us in this period is to diversify our income and to ensure that public support enables us to be a sustainable charity in the long-term so that we can deliver on our ambition for a fairer society for refugees.

Our income in the current year 2017-18 will be around £6 million. Around 50% of this comes from the Home Office and from local authorities for our resettlement services, providing integration support to refugees from Syria and elsewhere to enable them to rebuild their lives during their first 12 months in the UK. We also rely on the support of individual grant-giving bodies and companies. Their support will be central to Refugee Action's future.

## The roles

### Context

Led by our CEO, Refugee Action is making a significant contribution to enabling asylum seekers and refugees in the UK to rebuild their lives. We do so through our direct support and advice to asylum seekers and refugees, our good practice programme training and supporting other charities, and our campaigns and advocacy on issues of concern to our clients.

We are seeking two individuals to strengthen the board at this critical time. We wish to recruit a Treasurer, who has experience of working in a senior financial role and can advise and guide the board in financial management. We are also seeking to recruit a trustee with expertise in advice services to provide guidance and support to our vital work in this area.

To ensure the board better reflects our client group, applications from refugees, asylum seekers and individuals from ethnic minorities are strongly encouraged.

For more information about Refugee Action, please visit: [www.refugee-action.org.uk](http://www.refugee-action.org.uk)

You can read Refugee Action's annual report for 2015-16 [here](#).

Refugee Action's strategy, approach and budget have all changed substantially over the past twelve months. A copy of our 2016-19 strategy is included as an attachment to this information pack for your reference.

## Treasurer

### Purpose of the Role

- Advise and guide Trustees in the charity's financial management to enable the board to fulfil their responsibilities

### Key duties of the Treasurer

1. To advise the board on the budgetary implications of strategy and ensure that strategy is optimal for Refugee Action to be a sustainable and successful going concern.
2. Ensure statutory financial responsibilities are met and report formally to the board on the annual Auditor's report and accounts.
3. Lead on the boards duty to ensure proper accounting records are kept, and financial resources are properly controlled and used.
4. To work with and support staff in Refugee Action with financial responsibility, in order to be satisfied that the financial information presented to the board is comprehensive and accurate.

In addition, the Treasurer will work with the Head of Finance to ensure:

- that RA operates within the legal and financial guidelines set out in current legislation and its own standing orders
- that the board is informed of the medium term budgetary perspectives within which budgets are proposed to the board for adoption as a mandate for management in the coming year
- that adequate financial controls are in place, and that RA operates within a sound financial framework
- that grants and other funds received for specific purposes are appropriately spent
- identify the reserves and deposit strategy to maximise returns compatible with RA cash flow needs.
- all financial dealings are adequately accounted for
- identify financial risks facing RA and recommend appropriate action
- manage the process of appointment of Auditors to RA

Alongside the duties listed above, the Treasurer will also be responsible for undertaking duties of a Trustee. These are listed below.

## Key duties of Trustees

### Statutory duties

- To ensure that the organisation complies with its governing document, charity law, company law and any other relevant legislation or regulations
- To ensure that the organisation pursues its objects as defined in its governing document for public benefit
- To ensure the organisation uses its resources exclusively in pursuance of its objects: the organisation must not spend money on activities which are not included in its own objects, no matter how worthwhile or charitable those activities are
- To contribute actively to the board of Trustees' role in giving firm strategic direction to organisation, setting overall policy, defining goals and setting targets and evaluating performance against agreed targets
- To safeguard the good name and values of the organisation
- To ensure the effective and efficient administration of the organisation
- To ensure the financial stability of the organisation
- To protect and manage the property of the charity and to ensure the proper investment of the charity's funds

### Other duties

In addition to the statutory responsibilities outlined above, other duties may include

- To lead and provide guidance to the board in a given area of expertise
- Meet with donors and any other stakeholders to represent Refugee Action and its beneficiaries
- Keep up to date with Refugee Action's services to clients, Influencing and Fundraising work
- Attend 5 meetings a year– 4 in London, 1 away day.
- Read and scrutinise board papers before a meeting so as to be able to contribute fully in the meeting
- Occasional participation in a working group
- Occasional participation in staff interview, disciplinary or grievance panels

## Skills knowledge and experience

### **Specialist skills, knowledge & experience for treasurer role only**

- Experience of working in a senior Financial role: setting budgets, working with management accounts, financial controls and risk assessment systems.
- Ability to work with auditors with a good understanding of the financial obligations of charities.
- Ability to effectively guide and support Finance staff.

### **Specialist skills, knowledge & experience for the trustee role only**

- Experience of leading advice services (any sector), including understanding of quality standards and innovative new approaches.

All other skills, knowledge and experience listed apply to both roles.

### **Safeguard and promote the values and mission**

- An understanding of, and empathy for, the needs of refugees and asylum seekers and of their communities
- Commitment to Refugee Action's (RA) vision, purpose and values and to act in a manner consistent with these
- An understanding of the important of RA being responsive to the needs of its beneficiaries and of their wider communities

### **Determine the Strategy and Structure**

- Experience of setting, monitoring and reviewing strategic plans so as to be able to ensure any Refugee Action plan reflects the charity's values and mission and that progress is being achieved
- An understanding of how an organisation remains sustainable

### **Be effective, responsible and accountable**

- As part of the Trustee board, be able to ensure that the organisation is using its resources appropriately (comply with legislation and ensure the organisation can account for its activities)
- An understanding of and ability to review key areas of risk for Refugee Action to ensure appropriate policies and controls are in place
- Ability to review organisational policies and practices

### **Make sure the board of Trustees functions effectively**

- An understanding of the role of Trustee and the legal duties, responsibilities and liabilities attached to it
- An understanding of the role of the Hon Officers (Chair, Vice Chair and Treasurer) and those of the Chief Executive and his/her management team
- A commitment to prepare for and attend Trustee meetings
- Ability to analyse information and, in an appropriate manner, challenge when necessary
- Ability to recruit and induct other Trustees where necessary

## **Terms of Office**

Trustees will be appointed for a period of three years.

At the end of this time they may offer themselves for re-election. No member of the Board shall be in office for more than 9 years in total.

## How to apply

Application is by CV and a cover letter, outlining why you are interested in becoming a Trustee at Refugee Action and why you believe yourself to be suitable for one of these roles. In doing this, please address the skills, knowledge and experience identified.

If you would like to have an informal conversation about the role please contact Stephanie Browne on 0207 952 1564 who will arrange for you to speak with a relevant contact.

We would also be grateful if you could complete an Equal Opportunities Monitoring Form. This will be removed from your CV before shortlisting.

Successful applicants will be asked to provide 2 references and complete eligibility declarations.

Closing date for receipt of applications is: **09:00am, Monday 13<sup>th</sup> November 2017.**