



Action for Refugees

Activities, stakeholders and impact

Review 2017-18

Promoting a multi-faceted, positive response to the refugee crisis that includes learning from the experiences, skills and knowledge of all involved



Following visits to the Calais “Jungle” in 2016 by members of staff in the Faculty of Education, Action for Refugees (AfR) was established at Edge Hill University (EHU).



Professor John Cater, Vice-Chancellor of Edge Hill University opens the Action for Refugees Conference 6 July 2017

In July 2017, the Faculty and I4P supported a one day conference that brought together academics, activists and members of refugee communities to explore good practice, find out about the challenges of the field, and look to develop work that would make a tangible difference in terms of research and teaching.

The conference enabled delegates to increase their knowledge and understanding of the refugee crisis and make a contribution to a multi-faceted, positive, response.

Delegates took part in discussions with UNHCR staff working in a refugee camp in Alexandria, Northern Greece via a live link-up and with refugee presenters now living in our local area.

They were also able to learn first-hand regarding relevant research undertaken by academic colleagues, the work being done by local agencies working with refugees and the practical support for refugees already provided by some of our staff and students in response to the crisis.

As part of this event, the Dean, Dr Lynette Turner and the Director of I4P, Professor John Diamond committed to support future collaborative work that would ensure all ITT programmes reflected refugee awareness and that the university’s facilities were available to support refugee initiatives.



Refugees from Syria now living in Liverpool presenting to the conference.

The aims and objectives of the group align closely to the University’s principles of equality, diversity and social justice. We contribute to the creation and maintenance of an inclusive culture where equality is practiced and diversity is valued. We want to share relevant research and increase knowledge and understanding of the refugee crisis. We also want to provide practical support to refugees, asylum seekers and those agencies working with them. The group

plays a role in ensuring that all teacher-training graduates from the University are better able to meet the learning requirements of refugees. Perhaps most importantly, we want to learn from the experiences, skills and knowledge of refugees and asylum seekers.

For the purpose of this report, we refer to refugees to include all those who have either been granted refugee status or who are going through the process of claiming refugee status (asylum seekers).

There are three main themes to our work; community engagement, research and curriculum development

1. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

All AfR events are open to our contacts in the community. Events particularly focussed on community engagement have included our Welcome Days. These have been organised by staff, students and refugees to provide mutual learning opportunities in subjects including IT, art and design and language learning.

With the support of West Lancashire CVS, Shahin and Peiman led Farsi Language sessions for trainee primary teachers. Together they produced a teaching Farsi booklet for use in the classroom.

A booklet of Farsi language resources for working with primary aged children

This booklet created by 1st year Primary Education trainees at Edge Hill University supported by Peiman and Shahin.



Thanks to Peiman and Shahin for giving their time to support EHU 1st Year Primary Education trainees

Lauren Martin, Rebecca McMinn, Peter Lambe, Alice Porter, Shannon O'Connor, Emily Biggerstaff, Georgia Brennan, Eden Heys, Lois Highton, Rebecca Cleave, Elizabeth Burbridge, Jessica Astbury, Morgan Casey, Tahmina Hussain, Ismaa Khalid, Georgia Brown, Evie Haskisson & Kiran Hafiz.

This resource uses english, farsi and phonetic pronunciation.

Greetings



It is clear how these events contribute towards meeting our goals:

1. Increased knowledge and understanding of the refugee crisis.
2. Ensure that teacher-training graduates from the Faculty of Education are better able to meet the learning requirements of refugees.
3. Learning from the experiences, skills and knowledge of refugees and asylum seekers.

4. Contribute to the University's equality, diversity and social justice agendas by valuing and engaging with our diverse communities.



Staff and students came together in June 2017 to host a group of local refugees on campus, with the support of West Lancashire CVS. These groups worked together to learn skills in stop-motion animation, and competed in a 'friendly' football match using the university's sports facilities



The football proved so popular that it became a fortnightly fixture involving local refugees, students and staff. At one game involving teams from Skelmersdale and Liverpool, two former neighbours in Aleppo met for the first time since fleeing the civil war in Syria. Dr. Jack Sugden, who organises the football stated, "By organising football games between and among refugees that have been resettled from a collection of nations, such as Eritrea, Iran, Syria, Iraq...along with students and staff from Edge Hill. What we have begun is a process of mutual learning and understanding that can be facilitated through sport."

Our community engagement includes volunteering. Members of the group have performed voluntary work with a number of agencies here and abroad including with [West Lancs CVS](#), [Care4Calais](#) and [Refugee Community Kitchen](#). We have helped organize a placement teaching English to BAME women at [4Wings](#) voluntary organization in Liverpool. We have organised fundraising events for charities working with refugees and asylum seekers and provided practical help and support with job seeking, applications for educational courses and access to healthcare.



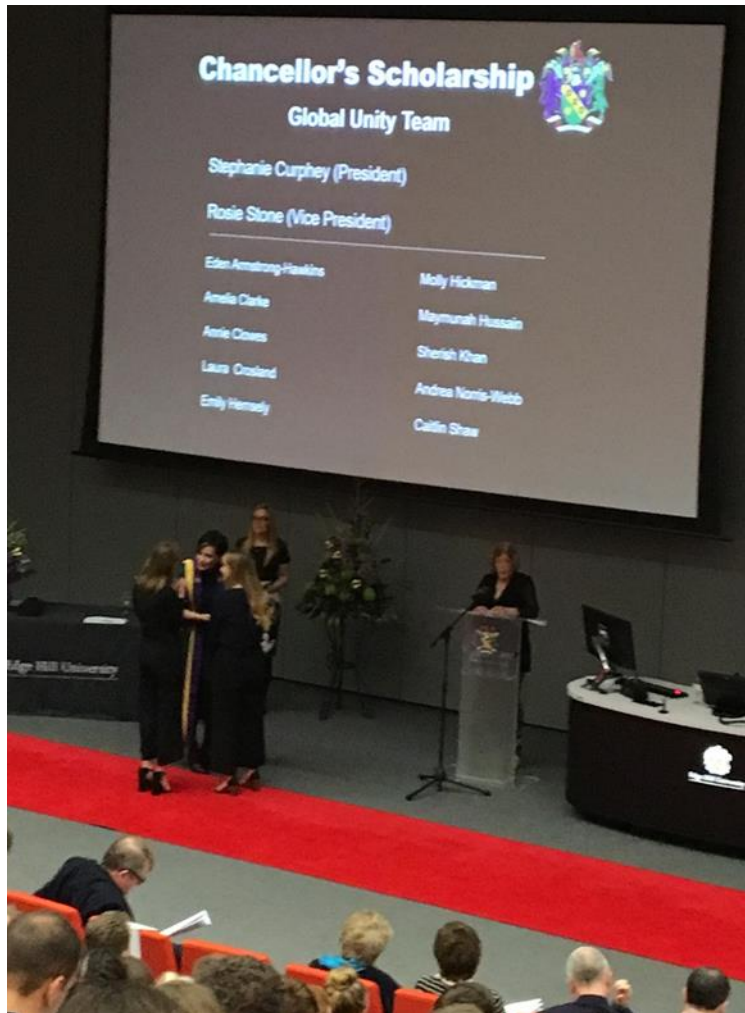
Above: Martin Ford, Charlotte Hastings and Jo Watt, Faculty of Education fundraising event December 2017.

Left: Mike Stoddart about to set off for Calais, January 2019

In December 2017 staff and students raised over £100 to support Care4Calais as well as donated sleeping bags, food, toiletries and warm clothes for the refugees in and around Calais. Mike Stoddart wrote a [blog post](#) on his visit in January 2018 and a [follow-up post](#) on his third visit in January 2019.



The group works closely with the **Global Unity society** of Edge Hill University's student union. In 2018 the society was awarded the Chancellor's Scholarship in recognition of its good work.



2. RESEARCH

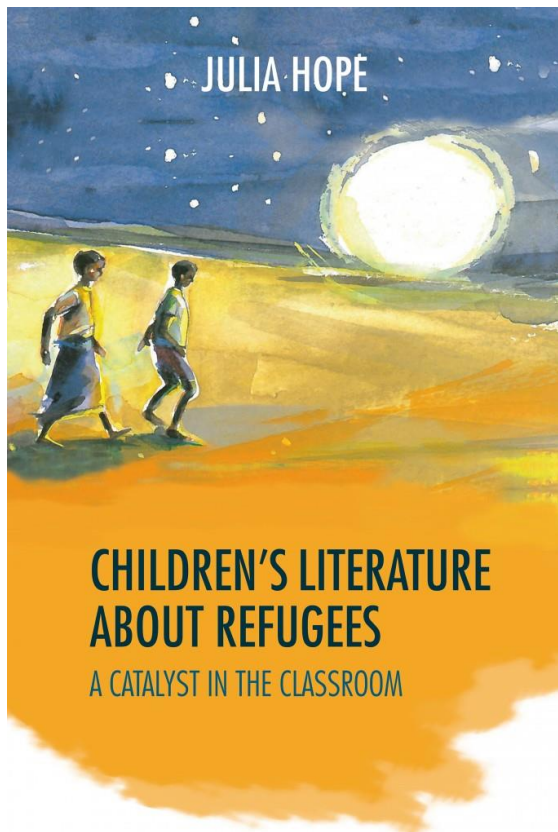
Sharing the latest research is a vital aspect of the work of the group. By engaging in and sharing relevant research, we aim to increase knowledge and understanding of the refugee crisis.

1. 'The Role of Schools in Resettling Refugees: Case studies from Scotland and South Australia'. In October 2017 [Dr Melanie Baak](#), of the School of Education, University of South Australia and then a Visiting Research Fellow of the University of Glasgow, shared her research with a packed audience of staff and student trainee teachers. Aspects explored including the role of EAL staff and language, the preparation of teachers to respond to refugee learners, parent engagement, racialisation and pedagogical and assessment flexibilities. Feedback was excellent with the following representative comments. "Brilliant session" and "I will definitely use this on teaching practice."

2. Dr Julia Hope, Goldsmiths' University - , 'Children's Literature about Refugees: A Catalyst in the Classroom'. This was next in the Action for Refugees seminar series. Julia shared her wealth of experience from her PhD research and a decade as a 'refugee teacher', working with children from a refugee background in the classroom. [Her book](#) addresses one of our most pressing global issues, often called "the migrant crisis", in a form accessible to younger

children. For child refugees to feel that their experiences are validated, and for others to understand their situation, engaging with the growing field of children's texts on the subject is crucial. Teachers also need to be encouraged to find ways in to tackle such challenging topics, with fiction providing the perfect catalyst.

Julia's presentation explored the range of ways in which children's books can support children with a refugee background to recognise themselves in fiction, as well as the opportunity for children without these experiences to develop empathy and understanding. Her examples demonstrated that even very young children can through discussion and art demonstrate a sophisticated understanding of the reasons people leave, and what it might be like to come to a new classroom, a new school, a new country. Feedback from this session was also excellent. One delegate stated, 'Excellent session – thoroughly enjoyed it. Thankyou!' Another, who is a trainee teacher commented, 'We need more talks like this.' Students and staff reflected on the way the session would help them to work with refugee families and children in the classroom.



3. Growing Up In Afghanistan Photography Exhibition by Guy Smallman, Hale Hall, September – October 2018



This powerful exhibition of the work of freelance photographer [Guy Smallman](#) took up residency in Hale Hall, one of the original buildings on the University's Ormskirk campus, for ten days beginning on 24th September 2018. It involved a display of selected photographs from Mr Smallman's time in Afghanistan. Guy is a self-taught, London based photojournalist. He has worked all over the world in many different countries and environments specializing in social issues such as human rights and poverty. Since 2008 his main focus has been Afghanistan. His work from that country has appeared in many publications including most UK newspapers, FT Weekend magazine, Channel 4 news and the BBC. He was also interviewed for John Pilger's documentary film 'The War You Don't See' after he became the only foreign journalist to reach the scene of the Granai massacre in Taliban controlled Farah province of Afghanistan. During his time in Afghanistan he built long term relationship with the internally displaced people living in terrible conditions in camps around Kabul. His exhibition featured their children, many of whom were born in the camps. The exhibition culminated in a fascinating question and answer session with Mr Smallman.

As well as presenting the research of others, members of AfR are engaged in their own research. These are closely aligned with the aims and objectives of the group and includes:

1. Dr Charlotte Hastings and Martin Ford – 'Diverse Access to Teacher Education: EHU Primary ITT'. Stemming from the question of a member of the refugee community "how do I go here?" following a visit to Edge Hill. The research looks to the experience of AfR members in supporting refugees to apply for HE, and asks how support can be offered to students from this particularly vulnerable population to enable them to fulfil their full potential, in the context of initiatives to welcome refugee students nationally, and particularly in the north-west.

2. Dr Jack Sugden – 'Imagining community through sport at Edge Hill University'. By organising football games involving refugees who have been resettled from a places including Eritrea, Iran, Syria, and Iraq along with students and staff from Edge Hill, we have begun a process of mutual learning and understanding facilitated through sport. For the refugees these games are something to do that costs nothing and gives them a chance to get to mix with young students and work on their English. This is a dialogical process. Students and staff who take part enhance their cultural capital and global knowledge. Getting to know the refugees, engaging with them as equals, can inform their development as teachers, scholars and people.

3. Mike Stoddart – 'From Syria to Speke; the experience of refugee families relocated under the UK Vulnerable Persons Relocation scheme'. It is a widely held view that the education system is a key institution in the successful resettlement of refugees (see for example, Taylor and Sidhu, 2012; Pinson and Arnot, 2010 and Bergset, 2017). The first stage of this study aims to shed light on how successful schools have been in assisting the resettlement process of pupils from a refugee background. I hope to identify some of the factors that have hindered or helped Syrian refugees thrive in their new home.

AfR works with and supports [Migration Working Group - North West \(MWG-NW\)](#). This brings together academics, organisations and practitioners working on migration who are either based in the North West of the UK, or researching migration in this region.

3. CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT

It is vital that as a major provider of teacher education in the UK, Edge Hill University ensures that all teacher-training graduates from the Faculty of Education are better able to meet the learning requirements of refugees. This is entirely congruent with the Faculty's values, philosophy and vision. It is essential, therefore that the curriculum is fit for purpose in this respect. The following are examples of the contributions made by AfR in meeting this aim.

1. MA in Educational Enquiry and Professional Learning module - Professional Practice for Social Justice. Mike Stoddart leads this newly developed module which recognises that education in its broadest form can be regarded as an ethical, moral and political project underpinned by notions of social justice and equity. Students are required to explore thoughtfully and critically the extent to which current systems, policies and practices enhance inclusion, equality and diversity so that barriers that exist can be addressed. There is of course, scope for students to investigate themes of direct relevance to refugees including the refugee experience in education.

2. Wider perspectives strand introduced within the Primary Undergraduate APD (Academic and Professional Development) Programme. Martin Ford as subject lead and Sarah Wright as Wider perspectives strand Leader, have ensured that this programme enables trainee teachers to recognise and reflect upon the diverse range of learners, including refugee children, in our schools. Trainee teachers on this programme have been involved in the planning, preparation and delivery of Welcome Days for refugees held on campus. These have included the provision of mutual learning opportunities including IT, art and design and language learning. Together with colleagues in the refugee community, they have produced the teaching Farsi booklet for use in the classroom referred to in section 1. Trainees have been able to develop a strong understanding and awareness of the impact of the background of learners and how to support them in achieving their potential. They are required to reflect upon the learning requirements of refugee children and to confidently provide excellent provision for them.

3. Post-Graduate Certificate in Further Education and Training – Expert Practitioner Series. Sessions have been provided for trainee teachers on this programme on meeting the learning requirements of refugees by experts in the field from Further and Higher Education. These have been very well-received and have contributed to outstanding achievements by trainees in providing learning that takes account of social justice, diversity and inclusion agendas.

We are very keen to ensure that the development of the group is led by the priorities of those directly involved. It is important to us that the group is open to refugees and asylum seekers as well as representatives from the wide range of organisations working to support them.

To find out more, contribute to [our blog](#) or to join our mailing list, please e-mail A4R@edgehill.ac.uk

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