



FRS NEWS

Supporting People

May
2023

FRS is a Registered Charity

Furness Refugee Support has grown in the last year as its activities have expanded to welcome and support even more people. As part of this growth, our committee has been hard at work behind the scenes applying for registered charity status for the group.

Earlier this year, all these efforts paid off and FRS is now a registered charity. One of the benefits of this is that we're now able to claim Gift Aid on the money that our supporters donate to us. If you want to find out more about how to donate with Gift Aid to FRS, you can contact John Brice, our treasurer, at johnbrice1942@gmail.com. Our registered charity number is 1201677.

Sponsor our Walkers

It's May, which means that the famous K2B and C2B walks are almost here.

We've had several teams who've taken part in this event in the past to raise money for FRS, and this year we have an incredible team of 12 people who'll be walking (and some might even be running!) the Coniston to Barrow route on Saturday 13th May.

If you'd like to sponsor any of our team to give them a boost before they embark on their 21-mile journey, you can find the donation page on the K2B website [here](#). You can look through the list of participants to find those who are entering in the FRS team, or you can easily donate to our first walker's page [here](#).

We'd be grateful for any amount that you can afford to give. We're also keeping our fingers crossed for good weather on the 13th!



Clockwise, from top left: A group of Ukrainians singing their national anthem; a table with some of the delicious food from the party; children joining in with the activities; dressing up for the photo booth.

Playing our Party

FRS didn't take a break after the Christmas period – instead, a group of our volunteers were busy planning an amazing New Year Party to give everybody an opportunity to celebrate. All of their meticulous organisation paid off at a wonderful event in the middle of January.

Hosted at the Forum in Barrow, FRS welcomed about 200 guests to celebrate the New Year with us. The event brought together people connected with the charity in various ways: Syrian and Afghan families, Ukrainian families and their hosts, asylum seekers, volunteers, members of Furness Multicultural Community Forum and many other groups and organisations. It was a real mixture of guests from different backgrounds, countries and faiths enjoying the lively atmosphere and the chance to chat and catch up.

Of course, there was plenty of entertainment on offer as well. Our guests got to enjoy dressing up for a few snaps in the photo booth, and the children who attended loved getting their faces painted with all kinds of different designs.

We also had the brilliant Dan Webber who put on entertainment for the children. There were games, songs and dancing to keep them busy! Although many of the children there were from different countries, nobody let language barriers stop them from joining in with the fun. The smiles and laughter were proof of how much everybody enjoyed the entertainment.

Children weren't the only ones to have fun – the adults got stuck in as well. We got to see people showing off their cultures' traditional dances, and there was a moving moment when the Ukrainian national anthem was sung.

No party would be complete without food, which FRS knows all too well. We had a delicious spread that was provided by a number of our volunteers and the families we work with. It's safe to say that nobody was allowed to leave the party hungry!

The event meant FRS started 2023 with a bang, and we loved celebrating the New Year with so many people. We couldn't have asked for a better start to the year!

Meet our Volunteers

Have you been wondering about what our volunteers do? In this feature, you can learn more from a Q&A with an FRS volunteer. First up is our Chairperson, [Kim Farr](#).

How long have you been involved with FRS?

I have been involved with FRS since the beginning, over 7 years ago.

What first made you want to get involved with the group?

When I saw the photo of the small Syrian boy dead on the beach (Alan Kurdi, a child who died by drowning in 2015), it made me search online to see if there was anything happening locally to help. I found that someone I knew was just setting the group up.

What does your role as Chair of the group involve?

My job as the Chair of Furness Refugee Support involves organising the agenda for our monthly meetings, and attending fortnightly meetings with the council, health services, Serco and the Home Office for the asylum hotels. There are also monthly meetings with the council and others focused on the resettled families and Ukrainian guests.

The role also involves answering lots of enquiries, and making sure the website and Facebook pages are updated with the latest information. Recently, it's involved setting FRS up as a registered charity.

Like many others, I deliver FRS support. I work closely with a resettled family, I attend Coffee and Chat sessions for the guys from the hotels, and take part in the weekly meet-ups for Ukrainian families.

I'm one of many who arrange trips and projects. These include the gardening project at Allotment Soup on Walney, the film club with Signal Films, and trips to the Jetty Museum.

What's the most rewarding part of volunteering with FRS?

I can't tell you what the most rewarding thing is. It's really wonderful when people thank you for your welcome and support. It's great to see everyone's English improve with help from many directions.

I am delighted that we've helped 11 members of our resettled families to pass their UK driving tests and it's heartwarming to see people enjoying a day trip with volunteers and others in the same position as themselves.

And of course, I've made lots of friends from all over the world!



Above: Kim Farr, Chair of Furness Refugee Support
Below: Volunteers hard at work at Allotment Soup, the gardening project that Kim has helped to organise for the asylum seekers.

Which of FRS's achievement are you proudest of?

I am very proud that, with only a couple of weeks' notice of the Home Office setting up an asylum hotel in Barrow, we were able to work with partners such as Furness Multicultural Community Forum and the Salvation Army to provide clothes, activities and a warm welcome for traumatised asylum seekers.

What would you say to anyone who'd like to get involved in FRS?

I would recommend anyone to get involved with FRS. There is a very wide range of activities to join in with and it's fun and rewarding. We also get lots of wonderful food!



Black Combe or Bust

On a grey and rather rainier day than hoped for, a group of our volunteers and 33 of the guys from the asylum hotels left Barrow with one goal in mind: make it to the peak of Black Combe.



After a train journey up the coast and some time spent wrapping up in the necessary waterproofs, the walkers began making their way up the fell, heading for a summit that was hidden by some lovely Cumbrian cloud.

Despite the weather (which luckily brightened up – a little!), everyone enjoyed the climb and tapped the trig point happily when they made it to the top. A great day out – after all, what could be more Cumbrian than tackling one of Wainwright's fells?



Left: a view of the (hidden) summit of Black Combe from the base.
Above: The group making their way up the fell.

FRS Recommends

This month, we're recommending the podcast *Forced to Flee* by UNHCR (the UN Refugee Agency). You can listen to it [here](#) or on streaming platforms.

Forced to Flee is a seven-episode podcast series which was created in 2021 to mark 70 years of the UNHCR. Presented by Anita Rani, each episode delves into the stories of people from around the world who have been forced to leave their homes in the last seven decades.

From Vietnam to Venezuela, from Eritrea to Myanmar, the podcast will introduce you to the stories of people who have become refugees, explaining the stark reality of what they have had to endure and the ways that they have created new lives for themselves in a new place.

The final episode gives you a broader view of the global refugee situation today, looking at how countries are responding to the record numbers of displaced people, and discussing potential long-term solutions.



Film poster for *Flee*, the animated film.
Image credit: Neon (via Wikimedia Commons).

Discussed with compassion and respect, plus some startling facts, this podcast is a fantastic starting point for anyone who wants to gain more of an insight into what it means to be a refugee.

Our second recommendation for this month is the film *Flee*, a 2021 animated documentary that tells the story of Amin, an Afghan man who escaped persecution in his home country and found a new life in Denmark as a teenager.

Framed as a conversation between the director and his childhood friend, the animated characters quickly come to life. Real news footage emphasises the horror and brutality of Amin's journey, but this moving film leaves you with more than sympathy for the characters: it leaves you with fondness and hope.

Flee was recently shown by the Film Club at the Roxy in Ulverston, where our chair, Kim, let viewers know about FRS's work. You can watch it on Disney+.

Dates for Your Diary

Furness Refugee Support meets monthly to discuss our plans and projects. If you'd like to come along to find out more about our work, you can attend our next meetings:

Monday 22nd May, 7pm

Salvation Army in Barrow

Monday 19th June, 7pm

Ulverston Methodist Church



Posters from the Five Days in May event at the Hope and Anchor pub in Ulverston. From left to right: quiz (17th May), Player's Night (18th May), Gerry Colvin with John Gallagher (19th May), a poster of the full five days mentioning all the acts. You can see the posters on our website or our Facebook group.

What's On

FRS is as busy as ever, and we're always looking for support, whether that's fundraising, volunteering, or just spreading the word about the work that we do. Here's a glimpse of some of our upcoming events.

Five Days in May at the Hope and Anchor

From Wednesday 17th to Sunday 21st May, the Hope and Anchor pub in Ulverston is hosting 'Five Days in May'. Kicking off with Tim's quiz, and followed by a combination of live music and art, there are five great evenings of entertainment on offer. Admission is free, with donations going to FRS. Don't miss it!

Refugee Week Stall

The 19th to 25th June is Refugee Week, celebrating the contribution refugees make to our society. As part of this, you'll find a Furness Refugee Support stall on Market Street in Ulverston on Saturday 24th June. There'll be food and raffle prizes on offer, or you're welcome to just come along for a chat!

If you'd like to get involved or learn more about our work, you can email us at furnessrefugees@gmail.com or join us in our Facebook group, [Furness Refugee Support Volunteers](#). Everyone is welcome!