

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S OFFICE
CHIEF EXECUTIVE
Fiona Marshall

05 April 2017

Dear Councillor

COUNCIL

Please find enclosed the following additional information, for consideration at the above meeting, which were unavailable when the agenda was printed.

9. **Update on the Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Programme** (Pages 3 - 4)

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'F. R. Marshall', enclosed within a large, loopy circular flourish.

Chief Executive

This page is intentionally left blank

Syrian refugees share their stories with school students

Two refugees from Syria have shared their powerful stories of fleeing their home country and finding safety in Yorkshire.

Brothers Alan and Ghaith shared their remarkable stories last month with Year 10 students at Upper Wharfedale School in a visit facilitated by local Refugee Council volunteer Fiona Protheroe.

Alan and Ghaith talked about their upbringing in Syria and the pair spoke of how happy they were before the conflict began. Ghaith enjoyed a successful career in marketing and Alan was an accountant. However, when the war started, everything changed. Alan was diagnosed with a serious disease and lost his leg and the brothers feared for their safety.

Ghaith said: "There was fighting everywhere. We were really scared. I was so scared for my brother. Aleppo was extremely dangerous. Eventually, the water and the electricity stopped. We couldn't wash or drink.

"I had to collect water from far away but I was afraid to go out. No for me, but for my brother. Alan could no longer walk, could not run if we needed to. It was just the two of us, we had no relatives. I couldn't even go outside to get Alan something to eat or drink."

With help from a church, the brothers managed to escape to Lebanon and from there were selected for resettlement to the UK, arriving in Yorkshire in late 2015.

Alan and Ghaith are now volunteering with the Refugee Council, helping other new arrivals from Syria adjust to their new lives in safety.

The students were able to ask questions about Alan and Ghaith's lives in Syria and how they came to the UK.

Alan explained how welcoming the people of Yorkshire have been, saying: "I was extremely nervous before coming to the UK, I wasn't sure we would be accepted. But the people in Leeds, when they see me in my wheelchair, respect me and help me. Leeds is a beautiful city."

Staff and students felt moved by Alan and Ghaiths' experience, and are looking at ways to support refugees locally.

Assistant Head Helen Mukherjee said: "It was a great privilege to welcome Alan and Ghaith to school and to hear their story. The students spent the day discussing sensitive and controversial issues and hearing the real life stories of people's lives was so valuable in helping make sense of big issues. It was great to see the impact that this had."

Refugee Council volunteer Fiona Protheroe, who facilitated the visit, added: "A lot of people living in the local area have read a lot about refugees in the news, but have never had the chance to meet one personally. Alan and Ghaith's willingness to share their experiences of being forced from their homes was undoubtedly a powerful illustration for the Upper Wharfedale students of who refugees really are, and why it's important we offer them shelter."

Criteria for Refugees eligible for consideration under the Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) will continue to refer people to the scheme. The UK sets the criteria. It currently prioritises those who cannot be supported effectively in their region of origin: women, children and young people at risk, people in severe need of medical care and survivors of torture and violence, refugees with legal and/or physical protection needs; refugees with medical needs or disabilities; persons at risk due to their sexual orientation or gender identity; and refugees with family links in resettlement

This page is intentionally left blank