



News From Grampian Regional Equality Council (GREC)

Welcome to the latest edition of the GREC Bulletin!

The bulletin is where we share updates of what we've been up to recently, as well as up-coming opportunities and events.

This bulletin reaches GREC members, partners and community contacts, but we're also keen to hear and share news and events from community organisations, so please get in touch with us (info@grec.co.uk) if you would like us to publish some information about other relevant events.

www.grec.co.uk

[FACEBOOK.COM/GRAMPIANREC](https://www.facebook.com/GRAMPIANREC)

[TWITTER: @GRAMPIANREC](https://twitter.com/GRAMPIANREC)

CONTACT:

General Enquiries/Training:

info@grec.co.uk
01224 595505

InTrans

Interpreting & translation services with special rates for the third sector.

in-trans@grec.co.uk
01224 576795

Casework

Confidential advice and support service (Aberdeen).

casework@grec.co.uk
07857 180175

Counselling

Confidential counselling for adults (Aberdeen), children and young people (Grampian).

pbooth@grec.co.uk
01224 595505

Language and Integration

Free English language learning opportunities.

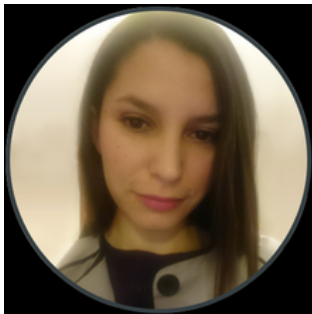
language-cafe@grec.co.uk
01224 576797

Financial Inclusion

mmccall@grec.co.uk
01224 576796

New General Managers at GREC

We are delighted to announce that Maria Jose Pavez and Ross Mackay have been appointed as joint post-holders as General Manager of GREC. Both have been with GREC for several years, and will continue aspects of their existing roles. Maria Jose has been leading our Policy Influence work (more below) and our Health and Diversity Network since 2019. Having initially started working on our Language Cafe project, Ross has been GREC's Caseworker for the past five years, as well as leading on a range of projects with New Scots in Aberdeen City and Shire.



The pair will replace Dave Black, who is leaving the organisation for another role. Dave had been in the role for almost eight years, having earlier joined the organisation as a volunteer in 2007, and as a Gypsy/Traveller Liaison Worker from 2010-14.

GREC Chair, John Tomlinson, added: "Dave's tenure as General Manager has seen so much progress over the past 7 years - he moves on to a fresh challenge with our gratitude and very best wishes. Leaving behind a fantastic staff team we are delighted that following a rigorous recruitment process two of the team will now step up to the role of General Manager".



Remembering Srebrenica

GREC supported an event to mark White Armband Day on May 31st

An event was held at the Seven Incorporated Trades building in Aberdeen, to mark White Armband Day on May 31st. The event organising was led by a leading member of Aberdeen Mosque and Islamic Centre, as well as Remembering Srebrenica Scotland, whose trustee, Robin Macpherson, compered the event.

The event combined powerful speeches, including from a Bosnian survivor of the genocide in 1992-93.

There was also music performed by young people from several Aberdeen City schools, including a pupil whose family had been forcibly displaced from Bosnia.

"White Armband Day commemorates the ethnic cleansing of Muslim people in Prijedor in Northern Bosnia-Herzegovina, where over 3000 people were killed.

This was the beginning of the campaign of extermination of the non-Serb population in Prijedor,

which resulted in the ethnic cleansing of 94% of the Bosnian Muslim and Bosnian Croat population from the Prijedor municipality." (read more at:

<https://srebrenica.org.uk/what-happened/history/white-armband-day>)

Aberdeenshire Councillor and member of Remembering Srebrenica Scotland, Allison Evison, spoke at the event. A written version of her speech has been published on the GREC website, and can be found [here](#).



Marking Volunteer Week

GREC held two events to mark volunteer week in early June. Our volunteers play a massive part in the organisation, supporting the running of key projects like our Counselling Service and Language Cafe. We were also delighted that one of our existing volunteers, Vivian, offered to write an article for us...

Volunteering for the communities, GREC feels like a family.- by Vivian Tu

Being an individual wanting to work for marginal minorities in the societies, I was introduced to GREC through the City Council's Refugee Resettlement Project. I always remember my first contact with Molinda, the then Counselling Manager at GREC back in 2019, being so warm and caring. It kick started my first impression of GREC and my curiosity of how this journey will be. Then, as my volunteering journey unfolded with GREC, I met Dave, the General Manager, Gosia the Volunteer Co-ordinator, Ross and Molly from the Casework team, Rosie at In-Trans and more in-person at the office, meetings and online during the pandemic. Each encounter with GREC members of staff reaffirmed my impression of how unique, and most caring and genuine GREC is out of the charity organisations I have worked for in the past years.

Here, from the head to the volunteers, everyone always has time for you in each encounter, even the brief moments in the corridor it feels respectful, with a genuinely caring approach.

Everyone is a significant individual and valued at GREC, no one is overlooked – this has been my personal experience of how GREC has been with volunteers, and I observe and recognise this has also been how the GREC volunteers and staffs are striving to provide these elements of care and attention with individual service users in the communities: everyone is significant and valued in society.

GREC feels like a family, and we welcome more volunteers with the compassion and love for humanity to join us, to help contribute into the world in our little ways, making bigger waves together into the future.



GREC staff and volunteers celebrating Volunteer Week at Duthie Park

Project spotlight: Influencing positive change in policy and practice

Since November 2021, we have been strengthening our work to provide robust evidence and harness community voices to influence positive change in policy and practice in Grampian and beyond.

Supported by the Scottish Government's Equalities and Human Rights Fund, our work in this area has focused on developing internal processes to better identify the equality issues affecting people on the ground and also wider systemic issues. Our different services, projects and connections with communities are key to identify these issues. During this period, we have identified and focused on over 20 specific equality issues affecting communities. Some of these issues include:

- Lack of immigration solicitors in the North East.
- Concerns about the E-consult system and accessibility to GP services.
- Lack of representation of and economic barriers faced by African communities and people with No Recourse to Public Funds (immigration condition).
- Lack of consistent, systematic and effective equalities training for relevant staff across the public and other sectors.
- Neighbour disputes with elements of prejudice and discrimination that are not addressed as such.

When we identify these issues, we look to develop a policy briefing with national and local evidence, and recommendations to make a strong case for positive change with policy makers and key organisations. We have also been working on broader equality issues to develop our position on key matters, such as [systemic and institutional discrimination](#), and on [New Scots resettlement](#) including refugees and asylum dispersal.

Since people seeking asylum arrived in Aberdeen in 2021, we have been collaborating with a range of national and local public and third sector organisations to provide an active welcome. As part of this effort, we recently attended the Equalities, Human Rights and Civil Justice Parliamentary Committee in the Scottish Parliament to provide evidence about the asylum system and the wide range of barriers and inequalities that people seeking asylum face. Furthermore, we supported the attendance of people with lived experience of the asylum system to directly share their opinions with the Committee, which will be publishing a report with recommendations for the Scottish Government later this year.

“It was an honour to share my personal insights and experiences on the asylum system directly with MSPs and engage in meaningful discussions (...). I am truly grateful for the platform provided by the Scottish Parliament, which allowed me to voice the challenges faced by asylum seekers and propose potential solutions. The discussions were enlightening and inspiring, as we collectively explored ways to improve the well-being and integration of individuals seeking asylum”

Participant in the EHRCJ Parliamentary Committee