

News

REFUGEE RESPONSE

SUPPORTED BY:



Diocese of Leeds

Catholic Care+



Introduction

The Refugee Support Group, in the Diocese of Leeds, has been operating for four years now; working across the Diocese to provide a place of sanctuary for refugees and asylum seekers. We are very grateful for your most generous response to the second collection held in February with over £32,000 donated. This will ensure our continued effort to raise awareness and offer support and encouragement to parishes, schools and organisations as they work to assist asylum seekers and refugees in their community.

Our desire is to offer a warm welcome, a safe home and hope for the future. To do this, we are supporting destitute asylum seekers through our work with St Monica's Housing and the WYDAN night shelter, helping vulnerable refugee families through the community sponsorship scheme and reaching out to potential volunteers across the Diocese.

We are especially delighted that Bishop Marcus was able to visit both St Monica's Housing and the Gianna Project this year. We thank him for his concern for the wellbeing of refugees and asylum seekers and for his ongoing support.

Bishop Marcus Visits St Monica's Housing in Leeds

On 13 June 2019 Bishop Marcus visited St Monica's Housing and met some of the destitute asylum-seeking women who are currently residing in the Beeston property.

He heard first-hand of their situations, what they have left behind, why they are seeking asylum in the UK and the issues they are facing with a very difficult process. He was amazed at their resilience and the fact that they simply do not give up.

Bishop Marcus was also able to meet some of the Trustees and Volunteers and gained an insight into the work which goes into the smooth running of the project.

In 2016 the Diocese granted the use of the empty presbytery in Leeds to provide a sanctuary for destitute asylum-seeking women. Since then St Monica's have supported about 30 women, providing a safe and stable environment where they are treated with dignity and respect. A second house in Harehills has recently opened where a further four women can be accommodated.

If you are interested in helping either house team either financially or as a volunteer then please get in touch. See back page.



Refugee Response

Wakefield

The Diocesan Refugee Support Group invites you to:

Refugee Response Wakefield

**Tuesday 22 October 2019
from 7.00 to 9.30pm – St Peter & St Paul, St George's Walk,
Standbridge Lane, Wakefield,
WF2 7NR**

This will be an evening with information about how to support both refugees and asylum seekers, especially in the Wakefield area.

Come along to hear about:

- Diocesan Support for Refugees and Asylum Seekers
- Community Sponsorship of Refugees
- Wakefield District City of Sanctuary
- Personal stories from Refugees
- The range of volunteering opportunities

With refreshments and time to share news – Everyone is welcome.

For more information please contact Lucy Irvén at lirven@catholic-care.org.uk

Poems of Hope

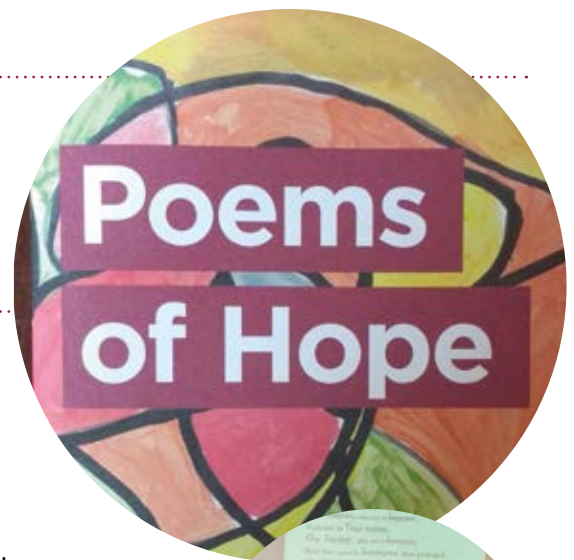
For Refugee Week this year, we made a booklet of the winning entries from last years Poems of Hope competition. We had received over 100 entries from 8 schools and were delighted with the imaginative and powerful messages of hope expressed by the children and young people. Copies of the booklet are available to be used in our Schools and Parishes to raise awareness.

St Joseph's Primary School in Wetherby hosted our launch event during a special Refugee Week assembly in June this year. Teachers and children from St Robert's Primary School, Harrogate and St Joseph's Primary School, Tadcaster, were also able to attend as well as visitors from Harrogate District of Sanctuary, parents, and members of the Diocesan Refugee Support Group. After refreshments we were warmly welcomed by Head Teacher, Louise Milivojevic.

Fr Barrie Holmes read a Prayer for Refugees and John Battle spoke about the Refugee Support Group. Lucy Irven said a few words about preparing the Poems of Hope booklet and told the children about Pope Francis' message of hope, quoted inside the back cover of the booklet. "We can and must all nourish this hope!!"

Children from all three schools stood up to read poems from the book and others presented work prepared for this year's refugee week. The afternoon was a great success and enjoyed by everyone who had come together to celebrate refugee week in this way.

Lucy Irven then went on to visit the other contributing Schools including Holy Family Secondary School, Carlton, and the Primary Schools St Philip's, Middleton, Leeds; St Stephen's, Skipton; St Francis of Assisi, Beeston, Leeds.



The Mother of Unfailing Help Parish in Leeds welcomes Destitute Asylum Seekers

Last summer, after attending a meeting about the West Yorkshire Destitute Asylum Seekers Network (WYDAN) Night shelter, the Cathedral Parish became very interested in the idea of using Wheeler Hall as a base for hosting the 10 male destitute asylum seekers.

A core group started planning for a week from 4th to 11th February 2019. The shelter was later repeated between the 29th July and 5th August 2019. Regrettably, the shelter, which operates throughout the Leeds area, had to close from the end of May till the 28th July because of a lack of host venues and so the men were back on the streets.

First time around, the parish raised funds of £833 and thirty six people volunteered to cover the four different shifts as the centre was open each night

from 6.00pm till 09.00am the following morning. Local restaurants and supermarkets generously provided meals and essential basic foods and a laundry service and shower facilities were provided by St George's Crypt. Parishioners very kindly prepared the evening meals for the second shelter.

Volunteer roles included setting-up the centre, socialising with the guests, serving food, washing-up, cleaning, preparing breakfast and packed lunches and of course being awake during the night shifts. The children from Holy Rosary and St Anne's Catholic Primary School produced cards with messages of welcome in different languages for each of our guests. The guests, who are referred to WYDAN by PAFRAS and the Red Cross, came from Somalia, Iraq, India,

Afghanistan, Pakistan, Palestine, and Democratic Republic of Congo. Communicating in English was not an issue and they all appreciated the welcome and kindness received. In return the volunteers found the experiencing humbling and uplifting on both occasions. Overall, this has been a very positive experience for the parish and has given us an opportunity to translate our faith into practical action.

For further information please contact Rev Dr Joseph D Cortis Email: joseph.cortis@dioceseofleeds.org.uk

Could your Parish offer to host the WYDAN Night Shelter in Leeds? Please contact Katrina Burton, the coordinator, on shelter@wydan.org or visit their website www.wydan.org

Refugee Response Bradford



In February this year, the Parish of Our Lady of Lourdes & St William's (Parish of St. Blaise), Bradford, hosted another very successful Refugee Response meeting for the Diocesan Refugee Support Group.

Nearly 100 people attended and at least 15 organisations that support refugees and asylum seekers in and around Bradford were represented.

A few days after the event Amanda, the Coordinator for Abigail Housing, got in touch to say that she had three new volunteers who had all been inspired to help after attending the meeting.

Abigail Housing

Abigail Housing's Destitution Project provides temporary housing and support to asylum seekers whose asylum application has been refused and who are destitute, but who are actively working towards submitting fresh asylum claims.

They have a number of houses in Bradford that have been provided for little or no rent and are maintained by volunteers. The residents have regular visits from volunteer befrienders and attend a weekly drop-in at the project office where they can collect clothing and food. Volunteers and donations are always welcome.

If you are interested in volunteering please contact our Volunteer Coordinator, St. Clair Brown on 07802723066 or email st.clair@abigailhousing.org.uk

Parish support

In March the Bradford Parish of St Cuthbert & First Martyrs, generously hosted a Ceilidh fundraiser to support both BIASAN and the Abigail Destitution Project.

The Wild Geese Band offered Irish music and dancing and the parishioners provided vegetarian pies and organised a raffle. Some of the residents from Abigail attended and a group from BIASAN who all had a wonderful time and even joined in some dancing. A substantial sum of money was raised for the Destitution Project which will be put towards providing Wifi for a year in the 5 properties. Wifi is a lifeline to the 19 residents; it facilitates evidence gathering for their asylum cases but more importantly it benefits their emotional wellbeing, as they are able to make regular contact with their loved ones back home.

St Stephen's Parish in Skipton have organised a group of volunteers to help Abigail in a more practical way.

As Sheila Gregory reports, "In July a group of six went to tame the garden of the vicarage of St Clement's Church, which houses 4 asylum seekers. The garden is a surprising jewel in the city though it had become quite overgrown.

As we strimmed and hacked and mowed we discovered a vine, a herb garden, a bed of rhubarb and a pond with a lily in flower (and lots of leeches!). On our second visit in August, we mowed the lawn and tamed the blackberries but also found strawberry beds, raspberry canes and apple trees all laden with fruit. We have really enjoyed these trips and have signed up as Abigail volunteers who are ready to help if and when they are needed.



With this help and support, many have gone on, after a number of months, to submit successful asylum claims and are now settled and working in the UK.

However, more households are urgently needed in Bradford.

Initial training is provided before the first guest arrives. The guests are referred by local projects and agencies working with asylum seekers who have known the person for months, sometimes years.

The Beacon coordinator checks that they meet the project's criteria and rigorous checks are made as to their suitability.

Beacon Hosting Project

Since 2008, Beacon's Hosting Project have worked with volunteer households in Bradford to provide a spare room, meals and kindness to more than sixty 'refused' asylum seekers who would otherwise have been homeless.

For more information, please contact Beacon's Hosting Project Coordinator, Will Sutcliffe at hosting@beaconbradford.org or on 07505 053149. Website: beaconbradford.org/projects/hosting/



Community Sponsorship

The Diocese of Leeds joins the Settle community in welcoming the newly arrived Syrian Refugee family.

Members of the ReSETTLEMENT Community Sponsorship Group set out one August morning to Manchester Airport to meet the family they had been preparing for over the past 12 months. "I don't know who was more nervous," said Paul Kelly, the project lead, "us or the travellers". Then the moment of truth when both groups see each other for the first time and all nervousness evaporates with big kisses between the women and more reserved handshakes between the men, all accompanied by big beaming smiles.

Then it's time for the journey to Settle and the joys of Manchester rush hour - welcome to England!

At last arriving in Settle, the family see their new home for the first time and cannot really believe it.

They meet two more volunteers who have prepared a Syrian meal for them and the Grandma in the family invites all the volunteers to stay to share their meal.

At the end of the day, everyone is exhausted but relieved and throughout it all the family toddler is running around playing ball as if she has lived in Settle all her life.

Since then, the many volunteers, with the assistance of some enthusiastic interpreters, have been helping the family with paperwork, appointments, applications for bank accounts and benefits and getting to know their new environment. We hope they will feel safe in their new home and find comfort and happiness in their new surroundings.

If you are interested in Community Sponsorship and think your Parish could offer a warm welcome to a refugee family then please get in touch with Carol Hill at carol.hill@catholic-care.org.uk

Wakefield District City of Sanctuary

Wakefield District City of Sanctuary aims to promote and encourage the inclusion of refugees and asylum seekers across the Wakefield District.

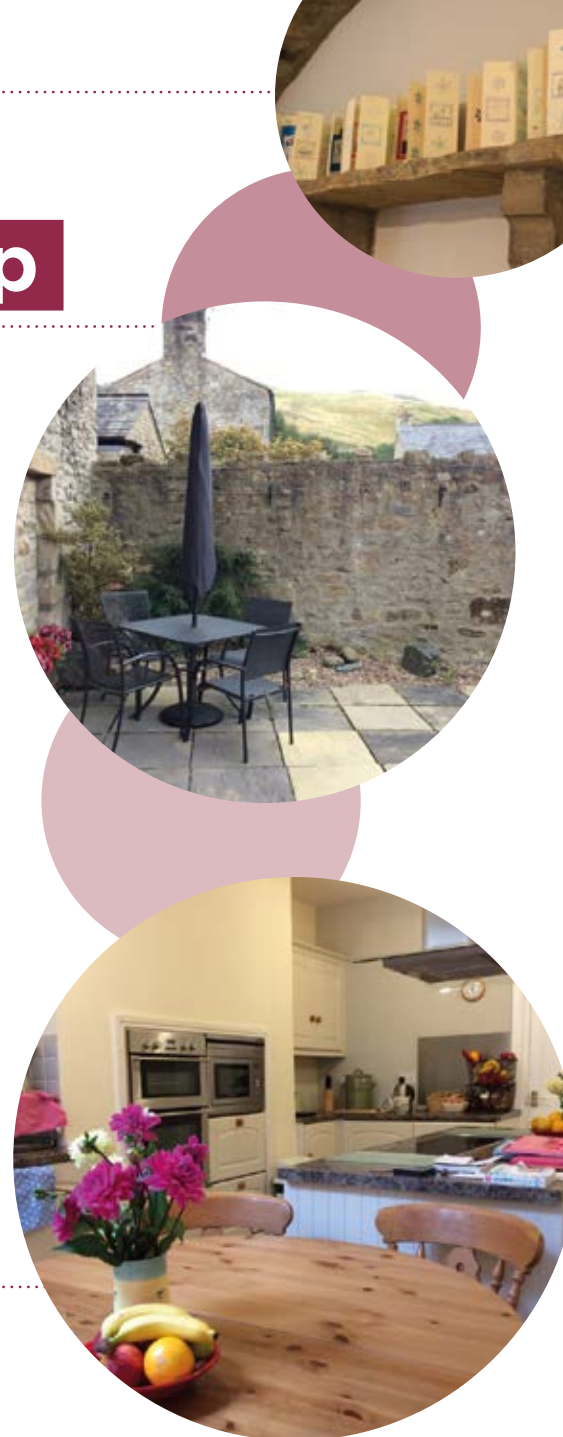
They are working with the local community, voluntary groups and faith communities and organisations to make Wakefield a place of welcome, friendship and sanctuary.

There are several weekly drop-ins across the city where asylum seekers and refugees can meet, be sociable and find help with Health, Legal matters, Education and Training, English language and Accommodation. The drop-ins provide free refreshments, an opportunity to practice English, play games and make crafts, and free Wifi.

They also run a Clothing Store offering help with clothing, small household items and bedding and a Garden of Sanctuary allotment providing fresh vegetables.

The Asylum Seekers Support Fund, ASSF, offers support to destitute asylum seekers who do not receive benefits and are not permitted to work, people with No Recourse to Public Funds and new refugees without funds. Since 2010 the ASSF has supported well over 100 people; some for a matter of weeks or months, some for several years, and the numbers needing support keep rising. They offer staple foods, fresh fruit and vegetables, toiletries and a cash supplement of £10 or £20 per week.

To find out more about this work come along to the Refugee Response event on Tuesday 22 October at St Peter and St Paul Parish Centre, Wakefield. See the front page for more details.



Update from the Gianna Project

On Tuesday 2nd April Catholic Care's Gianna Project was officially opened at its new Bradford premises and Bishop Marcus Stock led a short and moving service of blessing.

Catholic Care Trustees Sue Rix, Maureen Fletcher and Vivienne Birch joined Bishop Marcus, Father Matthew Habron and Director Carol Hill for this very special occasion. The guests were also able to meet some of the families that have benefited from Gianna services who came along with their babies to join in the celebration. This is an important development for the Gianna team as there is plenty of room in the new base to keep stock for the baby bank and they can also meet the families in the office space.

The Gianna Project was established in 2011 and since this time has supported more than 550 families with items from our

baby bank and much needed emotional and practical support. Many families that access the Gianna Project are experiencing very challenging circumstances; often fleeing violence and newly arrived in the UK they are in need of support and understanding.

At the beginning of July the Gianna Project received some

very special news; one of their families in Huddersfield said that they felt so blessed at having had the support of the Gianna Project these last few weeks that they are calling their baby girl, Gianna. How amazing is that!

If you would like to know more about our Gianna Project please contact us on 0113 3885400.



Welcoming Young Refugees

Foster carers are urgently needed across Yorkshire for unaccompanied young refugees.

The Welcoming Young Refugees campaign is raising awareness about opportunities to foster young refugees or provide supported lodgings. Almost 90% are boys in their mid to late teens and the number arriving in the region has increased since 2018. For young refugees, a home will represent a place to recover from past trauma and begin life in the UK.

A foster carer plays an essential role in a young refugee's future wellbeing and they also have a lot to give, as Sally from Leeds discovered. Sally fosters Kurdish refugee Hossein, now a performing arts student. "Hossein brought sunshine, enthusiasm and fun into our lives," she said. "He filled a space we didn't even know existed. My daughter had always hated being an only child; suddenly she had a little brother."

Hossein says: "I'm so glad that they are in my life, always here for me no matter what. It's not easy to let someone into your house without knowing anything about them. They opened the door for me, gave me freedom and trusted me with everything."

You can apply to become a foster carer if you are aged over 21, with a spare room and permanent leave to remain or British citizenship. Foster carers are paid and receive training and support.

Former Kindertransport refugee Lord Alf Dubs supports the project. "Young people are entitled to be helped by us to have a life, to have safety, to have love and affection. To get on with things, instead of this fearful existence, worried about their safety every night," he said.

Visit www.welcomingyoungrefugees.org.uk or phone 0113 535 1048.



Could you welcome a young refugee into your home?



Migration Yorkshire

DASH Huddersfield

DASH, Destitute Asylum Seekers Huddersfield, offers a range of services to support Asylum Seekers and Refugees in the Huddersfield area.

DASH, Destitute Asylum Seekers Huddersfield, offers a range of services to support Asylum Seekers and Refugees in the Huddersfield area. They run a couple of drop-ins offering Casework, Housing, Education, Health, Referrals, Food and Friendship. They also arrange trips to the theatre, museums and football matches and weekend breaks.

The Catholic Church, and in particular the SVP, help DASH in two ways;

Holy Redeemer Parish allows DASH the use of their parish social facility, the St Martin De Porres Centre in Huddersfield, for one day each week.

This is used in the morning for sessions with the DASH OISC accredited advisor, and in the afternoon for ESOL classes. DASH also uses the Centre for their management and trustee meetings.

The SVP groups in Huddersfield and Dewsbury are the main providers of pre-used goods to DASH clients when families transition from asylum seeker to refugee status. In the past 12 months we have spent about £7,000 helping 15 families to convert their empty council house into a home by the provision of cookers, washing machines, fridge-freezers, beds and carpets often sourced from the SVP store at Allenby House, Rees Way in Bradford.

Donations

Laptops – Solidaritech, based in Bradford, is developing a scheme to provide laptops to asylum seekers and refugees. They take used laptops, wipe the data, perform electrical checks and update the operating system as necessary. They are looking for individuals and businesses to donate their unwanted technology and volunteers to help with the technical work and the logistics of collecting and delivering laptops. **Please contact them on 01274 288 910 or visit their website Solidaritech.com for more information.**

Furniture – Donations can be made to the SVP furniture stores in Leeds and Bradford. Both offer a free collection service for local collections.

[St Jude's Furniture Store](#),
Marshall St, Leeds LS11 9EH.
Phone: 0113 245 0800

[CHAS @ St Vincent's](#), Rees Way,
Bradford, BD3 0DZ. Phone:
01274 726790

Pope Francis

“It is not only the cause of migrants that is at stake; it is not just about them, but about all of us, and about the present and future of the human family. Migrants, especially those who are most vulnerable, help us to read the “signs of the times”.

Through them, the Lord is calling us to conversion, to be set free from exclusivity, indifference and the throw-away culture. Through them, the Lord invites us to embrace fully our Christian life and to contribute, each according to his or her proper vocation, to the building up of a world that is more and more in accord with God’s plan.”

[Message for the World Day of Migrants and Refugees, 29 September 2019.](#)



Some Asylum Statistics

In the year ending June 2019 there were:

32,693 asylum applications in the UK (main applicants only)

20,366 initial decisions made of which 44% were positive

4,200 refugees protected under the Vulnerable Person Resettlement scheme

3,496 applications from Unaccompanied Children

Get in touch

If you are interested in helping in any way or feel you could do with more support in what you are already doing then please get in touch.

Please contact Lucy Irven,
Diocesan Refugee Support Group
Facilitator for more details: Email:
Lirven@catholic-care.org.uk
Mobile: **07739 975 020**