

PAFRAS NEWSLETTER

www.pafras.org.uk • info@pafras.org.uk • 0113 262 2163

Summer 2016 – Issue 40



For more than seven years a small close-knit team of volunteers has been making up food parcels to be distributed our service users at the weekly drop-in. The team have often wondered how the parcels are received, and what food preferences people have. So, it was agreed to solicit the views of people who currently receive, or have received, food parcels so that this could offer food donors more accurate information about preference and need, with a view to providing more culturally appropriate food parcels.

The feedback about the food parcels was very positive, service users expressed what a difference the food parcels made who were either in receipt of no asylum support and living in destitution or receiving as little as £5.29 a day for those eligible to access asylum support.

"They are a life saver.... they keep me going when I don't have nothing".

"I like everything. I give away nothing. They are not almost perfect. They are perfect".

"I have £5 per day and a food parcel can feed me for three days".

The following suggestions highlight some of the views of the service users who were interviewed, and are intended as guidance for our food donors who often ask for this kind of information;

- Rice and lentils
- Tinned pulses such as chickpeas and kidney beans
- Tinned vegetables and tinned tomatoes
- Tinned fish
- Chocolate, chocolate bars and sugar
- Coffee (most supermarkets sell sachets of coffee granules which are cheaper and lighter than jars)
- Jam and honey



Fresh fruit and vegetables were not included in the exercise as they're not currently provided within the food parcel, but when asked about their possible inclusion the suggestion was welcomed with universal delight, especially fresh fruit. We have been exploring possibilities of this with Fayreshare and Real Junk Food Project.

Hot Food

For over 5 years PAFRAS has been working very closely with Hamara and Give a Gift who provide hot meals over lunch time at the weekly drop-in. Rifhat, Director of Give a Gift, explained the ethos behind the project and "Give a Gift works with the community to provide emotional and practical support to migrant families who are new to Leeds, examples of support include funding towards school uniforms, contributions towards furniture, social activities and on-going advice and support to integrate into their new community." Rifhat has been key in brokering a relationship between PAFRAS and Leeds Grand Mosque who are now also providing a nutritious hot meal once a month for the drop-in, we're really pleased to be working with the Mosque and look forward to developing this relationship.

We're very lucky to also have the support of Sisters for Causes who have been cooking and donating delicious hot food for lunches at PAFRAS for several years too – their dhal is particularly popular!

Food is at the heart of PAFRAS and the food offer at the drop-in is about so much more than practical and emergency support, it offers a lifeline to those accessing it and an opportunity to share a meal in a warm, friendly and welcoming environment.

Ruth Davany

PAFRAS Operations Manager

WYDAN's Winter Shelter: The Revolution of Generosity in Action!

By WYDAN Trustees

WYDAN (West Yorkshire Destitute Asylum Network) was set up to increase bed spaces for destitute asylum seekers and to raise awareness amongst the public on the issue of destitution. We are a strong and proactive network with a membership including the British Red Cross, Meeting Point, PAFRAS, LASSN, Abigail Housing, BEACON, Destitute Asylum Seekers Huddersfield, St Augustines Halifax and others. We have been meeting and working together for over three years; partnership working is at the heart of what we do.

In May 2015, WYDAN called an emergency meeting for organisations and individuals across Leeds to discuss the increasing amount of asylum-related destitution our members had been seeing across West Yorkshire. We sat, with friends and colleagues, thinking about ways we could best support those who had sought safety in our towns and cities, but had been forced into homelessness and poverty. After thinking through a number of different options, we settled on investigating the possibility of setting up a winter shelter for asylum seekers facing destitution in Leeds.

We were inspired by the work of Inn Churches in Bradford, an amazing organisation who provide a winter shelter for people facing destitution during the harshest months of the year in Bradford. With their support, we were able to put in process our plans for establishing our own winter shelter in Leeds.

We were utterly overwhelmed by the amount of interest and unwavering generosity shown by the people of Leeds as we began organising for the shelter. Our first open meeting was attended by over 50 interested individuals, and over the course of the Winter Shelter pilot we trained over 400 volunteers, recruited 13 host organisations and provided 417 nights of accommodation to 15 individual men who would otherwise have been destitute in Leeds.

As with every pilot, we've learnt a lot from our experiences, the experiences of those who opened their hearts, minds and doors to asylum seekers facing destitution, and the guests themselves. We're spending the summer thinking about what we could do better next year if the shelter runs again.

Yet we are truly indebted to the amazing volunteers who ran the shelter throughout the winter. We honestly believe that the success of the project is testament to their sheer determination to provide a welcoming place for some of the most disadvantaged members of our community.

To summarise the words of one guest "this project has been the best thing since I came here 3 years ago. I now have friends across the city of Leeds. I went to every church we stayed in and talked to the congregation in all the denominations. I will take this experience with me. It has given me hope."

We cannot begin to fully express our gratitude to all those involved in making the Winter Shelter a success – from the referral agencies (including PAFRAS!) to the volunteers and then the guests themselves. It has been utterly humbling to witness the compassion, generosity and solidarity shown by people across Leeds towards those seeking sanctuary in our city.

Unfortunately, asylum seekers and refugees will continue to be made destitute in our towns and cities. Little has changed since the Joint Parliamentary Committee on Human Rights in 2007 stated that the government was enacting a 'deliberate policy of destitution' of asylum seekers. To this day, destitute asylum seekers are still living hidden lives among us, homeless and hungry. This, in the words of the British Red Cross, is a humanitarian crisis on our streets.

But we know that Leeds is a compassionate city. The Winter Shelter is just one example of how the people of Leeds are refusing to ignore the plight of people seeking safety in our communities. These everyday acts of welcome – no matter how big or how small – prove that there is always an alternative, and there is always hope.

Lambing time in Dentdale

Thanks to Yorkshire Dales Millennium Trust, farmer Rodney Beresford and Leeds Red Cross [minibus transport] a group of PAFRAS staff and clients were invited to a farm in the Ribbleshead area of Dentdale to spend some time with brand new Yorkshire lambs! This was an opportunity for a change of scene and some bracing exercise – a short but important break from the problems of seeking asylum.



Staff changes at PAFRAS :

We recently said goodbye to **Dora Rebelo** our mental health assessment worker. She has taken on a challenging role with 'Doctors of the World' in Greece and we wish her well. Dora has done a great job of building up networks and groups to help our clients, of many nationalities and cultures, cope with the often distressing situations in which they find themselves. We are currently seeking the right person to carry on this vital work – more news when we have it!

Snezhana Martynova, who has been a back office volunteer in the past has been appointed Finance and Monitoring Officer for PAFRAS. Her job is to keep track of just about everything! Having someone to do this job is so important, as trying to do this and run the Drop-In and help clients is well nigh impossible with the level of demand we are currently experiencing. We welcome her on board and wish her well in this new role for her.

Clothes donations



PAFRAS is no longer able to process clothes, bedding or childrens toys.

We are grateful for your willingness to help destitute asylum seekers but need you to help us by following our new arrangements.

To help us sort, store and distribute clothes donations we are now working in partnership with 'Yorkshire Aid'.

Please take all clothes, bedding and children's toys to:

**Yorkshire Aid Donations Hub
Richmond Hill Recreation Centre
Aysgarth Mount
Leeds
LS9 9AH**

This centre is usually open on Saturdays and Sundays from 1200hrs to 1600hrs
Check first > Website <http://www.yorkshireaid.org/howitworks/>

Thank you so much for your cooperation with this. With the help of 'Yorkshire Aid' we are able to manage clothing donations more effectively and meet the needs of our clients, including those made destitute through the asylum process.



**Drop-in day
is changing to**

WEDNESDAY

**Starting Wednesday
11th May**

Same time - same place!

**St Aidan's Church hall, Elford Place West,
Roundhay Road, LS8 5QD
10.00am - 1.00pm**

Do you have a spare mobile phone? If yes...would you consider donating it to PAFRAS?

Why?

To help us keep in touch with our clients,

To help them keep in touch with their families,

To facilitate appointments with Doctors, solicitors, case workers and The Home Office.

We need the phone to be working with a functional battery and charger.

Preferably unlocked but apparently there are black arts that can work round this!

Thank you.



Please bring them to the Drop – In on Wednesdays 10am – 1pm at St Aidans Church Hall, Elford Place West [off Roundhay Road] LS8 5QD

Or... call the PAFRAS office on 0113 262 2163