



Churches Together in the Merseyside Region

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SUPPORT FOR ASYLUM SEEKERS S.A.S

Dear Friends,

Report – June 2017

I was looking recently at some early papers inherited from Chas Raws regarding SAS. It was of interest to know that “SAS was a relief fund established by the churches on Merseyside in 1996 to help individuals rendered destitute by asylum legislation.”
“... It was an initiative of the Departments of International Affairs & Social Responsibility of MARCEA,”(the forerunner of CTMR) and that
“...SAS aims to provide support for asylum seekers and refugees in Merseyside both by relieving those afflicted by poverty and destitution and by contributing to projects which promote their physical, mental and spiritual well-being....).

Maria O'Reilly was one of the founding members and has given me the names of other founding members:

Alan Gayle [Liverpool 8 Law Centre]
Peter Simm [Liverpool 8 Law Centre solicitor]
Michelle Cox [NHS in Everton]
Sr Kathleen Ashurst [RC Sister of Notre Dame]
Chas Raws and Linda Patterson [Church Action for Racial Justice].

Maria recalls:

“We used to meet in the law centre conference room .We pulled together all agencies in response to the Kosovo refugees, then the Congolese. We clothed and dressed them from community donations in Liverpool 8 and donations of food. As others came on board we were able to attract donations, hence Chas was our treasurer and coordinator for the group.

“The Kosovo war meant Westminster Council were striking deals with landlords in Liverpool and elsewhere but many came to Liverpool to Catherine House on Parliament Street run by a disreputable landlord.

“They couldn't access any food or drinks after 5pm and those who raised concerns were bullied. They had no privacy and the carers !!! threatened them in their rooms and stole their belongings. We

Presidents

The Most Rev'd Malcolm McMahon, The Archbishop of Liverpool
The Right Rev'd Paul Bayes, The Bishop of Liverpool
The Rev'd Dr Sheryl M Anderson, Chair of the Liverpool Methodist District
The Rev'd Jacky Embrey, Moderator of the Mersey Synod of the United Reformed Church
The Rev'd Phil Jump, Regional Minister, North West Baptist Association
Major Drew McCombe, North-Western Divisional Commander, Salvation Army

(Churches Together in the Merseyside Region is a registered charity, No.519061)

at the law centre raised these concerns with NASS national support asylum seekers often to no avail.....”

In so many ways not a lot has changed - but the numbers of people seeking asylum and refuge have increased dramatically – so also has the number of countries from where people are fleeing.

For more than 20 years SAS has raised untold thousands of pounds and helped untold thousands of people, directly and indirectly, in furtherance of those two original aims meeting humanitarian and wellbeing needs.

In this newsletter I make no excuses for including many references and examples of current projects and initiatives which SAS is supporting financially, in collaboration with other local agencies.

The needs of people seeking asylum and refuge are still with us with little sign of diminishing. With continuing support and prayers SAS can continue to deliver for another twenty years. I hope that those founders of SAS would be proud that their valiant and brave legacy is still bearing fruit. Daily!

Unfortunately all this support has a cost. This is not an appeal but if any readers can support SAS financially that would be very welcome.

Financial Statements

Attached is a summary statement of financial activities for the 5 months period to May 2017 with comparative figures for the full year to December 2016, grouped under relevant headings of income and expenditure. This shows a net deficit for January to May of £8,549. From January 2017 we increased the basic monthly cap on grants to Asylum Link Merseyside [ALM] from £1,900 to £2,900. This may have proved premature judging by the current deficit but we hope to maintain this level of support until end of 2017 subject to fresh bids being successful. This cap will be reviewed closely over the coming months.

We received the second of three annual tranches for £10,000 from the John Moores Foundation. Additionally we received a grant from LCVS [Everyday Changes Fund] of £825.

29 individual donors continued to support SAS by either standing orders or individual donations and the local Wavertree Justice and Peace group donated £151.40 [plus clothes, food and toiletries]. One anonymous individual donated £500 and one widowed lady donates between £1 and £3 in cash each week from her pension specifically for the fruit project.

SAS has continued to contribute on average £230 per month to the fruit project at ALM.

SAS contributed to the ALM Destitution Project £18.5k in the first 5 months of 2017. This covered emergency support grants for individuals, food, toiletries, fruit and £12.3k for emergency accommodation.

SAS contributed £3,050 for individual support grants and support for wellbeing projects delivered by other agencies including MRANG [Merseyside Refugee and Asylum Seekers Pre and Post Natal Support Group], Faiths4Change and the Merseyside Probation Service.

SAS had one expense item of £1,524 which related to the printing costs for publication of the new ESOL pamphlet – “Refugees & Asylum Seekers: Welcome the Stranger: supporting English Language Learning”.

Properties and Emergency Accommodation

For those people recently refused permission to stay in UK or those given permission to stay, perversely the result can be the same – destitution - meaning no accommodation and no access to

public funds.

There are currently 250+ registered as destitute with ALM of which we are only able to provide emergency accommodation to 19 people.

SAS leased two additional properties in 2017 so we are now supporting 5 properties for emergency accommodation purposes– one for 8 destitute women, and 4 properties for 11 destitute men.

The plan to start a Night Shelter Scheme from February 2017, similar to the BOAZ model in Manchester, has been postponed until October 2017. Funding is still being sought to employ a Co-ordinator. ALM will co-ordinate the Scheme and SAS will contribute to start-up costs e.g. sleeping bags, bedding, cooking utensils etc.

We hope to provide emergency accommodation for 12 men each night seven days per week. Each church will provide food and shelter for one night per week. This will share the cost and resources between the churches.

So far we have 8 local churches, including ALM and the Salvation Army, who have offered to participate in the scheme.

SAS Support via Other Agencies

ALM

ALM gives individual emergency grants to the destitute. These emergency grants include the usual basic items:

- train/bus fares for asylum registration, court appearances etc.
- weekly bus passes
- council tax, utility meter top-ups

In addition 50 to 60 destitute people are receiving food and toiletries each Friday. Emergency rations and clothes are also provided whenever necessary.

Breakfasts are still routinely being provided daily, and hot lunches on average for 200+ people.

The fruit project is providing one piece of fruit each day to every visitor to ALM.

“Places to Go and Things to Do” – ALM ESOL project

Over the next year ALM teachers of ESOL [English for Speakers of Other Languages] are hoping to stimulate their lessons at ALM by arranging walks and days out around Merseyside for some of their students. This seems an ideal way to target and improve the wellbeing of the students in their care. SAS has decided to make a small grant towards their outing costs. See below the brief outline of their ideas from teacher Bridie Sharkey:

“We would like to take our classes out to the cultural centres in Liverpool, the various museums, galleries, theatres, and the surrounding areas, the Antony Gormleys, to The Wirral attractions, Formby, Chester, or Southport. By doing so, students would gain confidence in applying their growing English skills in practical situations. We were keen to organise travel days where students have to plan the itineraries, read the train or ferry timetables, catch the bus or the train, buy the tickets, make arrangements on the phone etc. However, we have absolutely no funding for this, for the travel expenses, or for a tea break, and certainly no funds for entry to any fee paying attraction such as Speke Hall or The Safari Park.

“Many of our students are completely destitute. Many live in SERCO hostels, or they barely make ends meet, in rooms in the inner city. Most have not been able to afford one day outside Liverpool inner city, since they arrived, some three or four years ago. As a group of teachers, we really want to organise one or two days away from the inner city and plan some practical, confidence- building lessons around the activities.”

Faiths4Change

I have received regular reports from Lilli Merry regarding the courses and workshops they have been able to deliver, following some funding from SAS. I can do no better than show some extracts below from Lilli’s reports which highlight the tremendous work and results they are achieving:

”March & April 2017

We ran four events to enable cultural exchange between asylum seekers and refugees and allotment holders. We harvested cooked and shared leek and potato soup. We used the soup as an initial discussion point of cultural exchange especially around the spicing and flavouring of food. Ron from the allotments also discussed typical English vegetables including leeks and sprouts to groups of asylum seekers and refugees. Thanks to support from two ESOL English Teachers (Bridie Sharkey and Sarah Byrne) and the Tomorrow's Women Group (coordinated by Emma Atherton) at Asylum Link Merseyside, it was possible to work alongside forty one Asylum Seekers and Refugees.”

Matched Funding Sahir House

“We have been running a 5 week series of cooking for health sessions which have just finished, ready for the next 5 week block. We have engaged with 12 participants through doing practical cookery, focusing on eating well and different nutritional needs and also cooking on a budget. Through the sessions confidences have increased, isolation has dropped and health and wellbeing has improved. It has been thoroughly enjoyed by all.”

“The qualification they have just undertaken is a level 2 food safety in catering which is the qualification necessary for employment in any role that requires you to handle food safely in any environment, e.g. restaurants, schools, hotels etc.

There is a level 3 and 4 in food safety in catering and also a nutrition qualification that we deliver. Hopefully given the success of this course if funding and interest permits we may be able to run further courses with them in the future.

We are also due to start delivering the nutrition qualification at another project, of which a high percentage of the participants are AS&R's, so that will be a nice test run.....”

MRANG [Merseyside Refugee and Asylum Seekers Pre and Post Natal Support Group]

A typical request from Manager Alison Moore at MRANG for individual support is shown below. Wherever possible SAS make 10 week grants of £25 per week to help individuals over difficult periods:

“Nass has stopped her payments and we are trying to prevent her and her partner from becoming homeless. They have no money and their destitute payments from the Red Cross stop this week. She has also just found out she is 7 weeks pregnant so it is a very stressful time. We are fighting to get her support re-instated but this will take weeks to go to through the system so she is desperate at present.....”

Probation Service [Merseyside Community Rehabilitation Company]

I asked one of the Probation Officers for some feedback on the support grants made by SAS for those

people seeking asylum or refuge who are out on parole or out on licence. Her comments are shown below:

“I can’t stress enough how vital the support grant has been to our destitute service users during the last 12 months. In particular, those service users who have an Unpaid Work requirement which they must complete. This has allowed them to buy food and drink during their community service, and this has contributed immensely to them being able to complete their orders and reduce their risk of reoffending. The swift, professional manner in which the grants are processed are greatly appreciated and the support the grant offers makes my role and working relationship with the service user much more effective.....”

ALM/Together Liverpool/Justice &Peace

CTMR/SAS, Asylum Link Merseyside, Together Liverpool, Liverpool Archdiocese Justice and Peace Group collaborated on an ESOL pamphlet “Welcome the Stranger – Supporting English Language Learning”. This pamphlet is freely available from myself or via the various collaboration groups in hard copy printed form. It should also be accessible as an online link from the various websites. The ALM website link is <http://www.asylumlink.org.uk/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/ESOLBooklet.pdf>

The pamphlet has already proved particularly useful for faith groups and charities who are suddenly seeing an influx of people seeking asylum. Asylum Seekers have been dispersed to new areas around Merseyside [St Helens, Knowsley, Halton etc.] where there is little or no support structures in place.

Support for SAS/ALM

I would take this opportunity again to ask individuals, faith groups and other organisations to continue to support the work of SAS and ALM e.g. donations, fundraising activities, new and old clothes, donating specific food items, etc. You can obtain a full list of food items wanted and fundraising ideas for SAS from the CTMR Office [sas@ctmr.org.uk or tel: 0151 709 0125] or directly from myself.

Cheques should be made payable to “Churches Together in the Merseyside Region Support for Asylum Seekers” or simply “CTMR SAS”.

We can provide a list of other ideas or suggestions for raising funds and supporting the work of SAS and ALM.

Thank you once again for the financial support to SAS over the reported period. Your continued support is greatly appreciated. Please keep in your prayers the staff, volunteers and trustees of ALM and SAS involved in supporting arguably the most marginalised group in our community.

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Ps If you prefer not to receive SAS newsletters in future please let me know. Neil

Support for Asylum Seekers
CTMR – Churches Together in the Merseyside Region
Registered Charity Number 519061

Statement of Financial Activities
for the 5 months period to 31 May 2017

	5 months Total to May	12 months Total
	2017	2016
Incoming Resources		
Grants from Organisations	10,825	30,937
Individual Donations	3,713	5,731
	14,538	36,667
Resources Expended		
Accommodation	12,328	14,256
Destitution Support	8,736	17,925
ALM Management Printing Expenses	1,524	0
Probation Grants for Asylum seekers	500	2,250
	23,088	34,431
Net Incoming (Outgoing) Resources	8549	2,236
Fund Balances		
At 31 December 2016	39,079	36,843
At 31 May 2017	39,530	39,079
Represented By :		
Bank Bal @ 31 May 2017	30,529	39,079