



Churches Together in the Merseyside Region

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SUPPORT FOR ASYLUM SEEKERS S.A.S

Dear Friends,

Report – August 2018

It is the time for holidays and breaks from our usual routines- a happy time full of hopeful expectation and a chance to reflect and re-charge. So in this newsletter, rather long I'm afraid, I have concentrated on the positives and successes achieved by the SAS Destitution Project in collaboration with our local partner agencies. The problems in providing adequate support to people newly dispersed to Liverpool and surrounding areas will be with us for some time, but we can only work together and concentrate on what we are able to achieve, and on reflection take some pride in how successful we have been.

In this issue you will read about the extensive renovations by ALM at St Anne's Centre and the start of a Night Shelter Project from September 2018, which will involve 7 local churches and take 12 destitute men off the streets.

MRANG continue their wonderful work with destitute Mums and babies, and SAS liaison with the Probation Service is enabling people on Community Payback to access and successfully complete their work commissions.

We hear about diverse activities to promote wellbeing from Faiths4Change, and an interesting Photographic Project exhibited at the Open Eye Gallery in Liverpool.

I hope you find it interesting starting with some Numbers.....

Financial Statements

Attached is a summary statement of SAS financial activities for the 6 months to June 2018 with comparative figures for the full year to December 2017, grouped under relevant headings of income and expenditure. This shows a net deficit for January to June of £14,123. Despite the increasing requests for emergency support grants we have maintained the basic monthly grants to Asylum Link Merseyside [ALM] capped at £2,900. This ALM cap will need to be reviewed closely over the coming months, as will the support grants provided to our other partner agencies [MRANG, Faiths4Change, Merseyside Probation Service etc.].

We have received grants from:

- John Moores Foundation £10,000 [3rd of 3 annual tranches]
- LCVS [Everyday Changes Fund] of £825
- Liverpool Cathedral £3,000

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 Roger Batt, Divisional Commander, North West England and North Wales, Salvation Army

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

23 loyal individual donors continued to support SAS by either standing orders or individual donations. SAS has continued to maintain a contribution on average of £230 per month to the fruit project at ALM and a widowed lady regularly donates £5 cash from her pension specifically for the fruit project.

SAS contributed £13.5k for emergency support grants, which is as much as the whole of the 12 months of 2017. Emergency accommodation of £13,546 is at a similar level for 2017.

Support grants include both humanitarian aid and wellbeing projects delivered by ALM and other local agencies including MRANG [Merseyside Refugee and Asylum Seekers Pre and Post Natal Support Group], Faiths4Change and the Merseyside Probation Service. SAS has also received personal referrals from local agency staff at foodbanks relating to asylum seekers who volunteer there [e.g. St Leonards Youth and Community Centre in Bootle].

SAS makes emergency support grants to the Probation Service for asylum seekers out on licence who have no access to public funds, and also for those on community payback schemes who cannot afford transport costs to their workplace, nor lunch while they are working. SAS has so far provided £3,170 in the 6 months to June 2018, i.e. more than the whole of 2017.

Properties and Emergency Accommodation

There are on average 250+ registered as destitute with ALM of which we are currently only able to provide emergency accommodation for 15 people.

With SAS funding ALM leased two additional properties in 2017 and a former Anglican presbytery in 2018 but vacated another property which was proving problematical, so we are now supporting 4 properties for emergency accommodation purposes— two accommodating 9 destitute women, and two properties for 6 destitute men.

The plan to operate a Night Shelter Scheme [based on the BOAS Model in Manchester using 7 different nightly church venues] has been reignited because a funding application by ALM for a Co-ordinator's salary has been successful. ALM will oversee the Scheme and SAS will contribute to start-up costs e.g. sleeping bags, bedding, cooking utensils etc. It is hoped to have the scheme running from October 2018, and will accommodate 12 destitute male asylum seekers. If it proves successful who knows we may be able to double up the nights and take a further 12 destitute men off the streets!

SAS Support via Other Agencies:

ALM

ALM is the main collaborator with SAS delivering the bulk of the destitution project. It is worth reminding that on average up to 250 are fed daily at St Anne's Centre with a hot meal, and up to 60 provided with breakfast consisting of porridge, toast and a hot drink. The fruit project allows for one piece of fruit per person per day. Food parcels and toiletries are distributed each Friday to the destitute to support them over the weekend, and emergency rations and clothes are provided as and when required.

ALM recently negotiated a 25year lease with the Liverpool Archdiocese for St Anne's Centre. This will allow ALM to open up and renovate the two upper floors and so provide much needed additional space for interview rooms, classrooms and office space. It is hoped to include a Prayer room and Mum and Baby washroom facilities. Work has already started on renovating the 2nd Floor and a substantial grant has been pledged by the Edmund Rice Foundation towards this renovation work.

We are still receiving requests for the CTMR pamphlet "Welcome The Stranger : Supporting English Language Learning" which has proved particularly useful for faith groups and charities that are suddenly seeing an influx of people seeking asylum seekers who have been dispersed to new areas around Merseyside [St Helens, Knowsley, Halton etc.] where there are few support structures in place.

ALM has recently obtained Council of European funding to showcase current best practice and resources available for Language Support for Adult Refugees. ALM will organise in November 2018 a one day conference at LACE [Liverpool Archdiocese Centre for Evangelisation], hosted by the Justice and Peace Group, and invite representatives from groups in the newly dispersed areas around Merseyside. SAS has

been asked to work with ALM in promoting the conference and these new resources including the Welcome the Stranger pamphlet. A provisional date for the Conference is 13 November.

As part of the Refugee Week celebrations in June SAS was able to contribute to the costs of the ALM barbecue and the outing and picnic to Thursaston. These are always well supported and eagerly awaited events in the ALM calendar.

SAS has continued to fund the “Places to Go and things to do” initiative at ALM, instigated by Bridie Sharkey, to complement the ESOL lessons at ALM. A recent outing was a visit to see the Terracotta Warriors Exhibition at the Liverpool Museum.

Faiths4Change

Annie Merry, CEO at Faiths4Change has reported back on some of their work which SAS has helped to fund:

SAS Fund Reporting: February, March & April 2018



Participants sewing the 'Life In St.Helens' quilt

Between February and April 2018 the SAS funding has been used to support people seeking asylum and refuge on Merseyside engaged in the St Helen's Art & Craft Welcome Group at St Andrew's Church, creating community conversation opportunities around the 'Life In St. Helens' quilt, allowed for the development of an exhibition of the artwork, supported the development of a Men's Space group in Skelmersdale and contributed towards the costs of our Vincentian Volunteer.

Support people seeking asylum and refuge on Merseyside engaged in the St Helen's Art & Craft Welcome Group at St Andrew's Church

SAS funding has provided a range of support to this project throughout its duration. The project brought together residents from both settled and newly arrived communities on a weekly basis to benefit from conversation and craft activities; reducing social isolation and increasing a sense of community connection.

In this period the group created the final artwork for the project; a 'Life In St. Helens' themed community quilt made up of squares sewn, using applique and embroidery. Each square shares something about the

participants' life in St Helens. ... Thanks to the support in creating a valued, responsive and caring environment, the group have decided to continue to meet weekly. 21 asylum seekers and refugees were engaged a total of 165 times.

Creating community conversation opportunities around the 'Life In St. Helens' quilt



A highlight of this project has been the space for conversation created within the sessions (and in fact outside of the sessions, as many friendships have been formed that continue within the parish and wider community).

The theme of 'Life In St. Helens' was chosen so that all participants would have their own perspective. This allowed for participants to share stories of growing up in St Helens; stories including row boats on the lake at Taylor Park and 'the hotties', where a factories out pipe created a stream hot enough for a local resident to keep tropical fish in! This has led to conversations around places to go, what has changed, what they love and local history. Squares on the quilt also feature different languages - Punjabi and Arabic embroidery spell out the word 'welcome' on the centre.

Behind each square on the quilt is a handwritten thought, prayer or wish that has been stitched into the banner. Participants were invited to write something privately that would become a part of the artwork and be kept safe within the layers of stitching.

The theme also opened up some personal stories, shared without encouragement, about how people arrived in St. Helens that had a profound impact on members of the group. Understanding and awareness has been increased within the whole parish as a result, thanks in no small part to St. Andrews' and Rachael's (parish nurse) commitment to actively welcoming asylum seeking community members of all faiths.

Meeting with the luncheon club, scouts, Rivington primary, Peasley Cross hospital, community members at the Christmas fair, opportunities for conversation and questions around the asylum process, life while seeking asylum, the difference between asylum seeker/refugee/migrant terminologies. Having a weekly presence at St. Andrews allowed the luncheon club volunteers to talk to me in depth before a session and ask a lot of questions that they hadn't had a place to address before.

Allowed for the development of an exhibition of the artwork

The 'Pray, Grow, Go' banners made in the project are on permanent display in St. Andrews church hall. The 'Life in St. Helens' quilt was exhibited at the Platform Gallery, St. Mary's market, St. Helens.

Supported the development of a Men's Space group in Skelmersdale

The Men's Space group in Skelmersdale aims to grow communities together. We are working to enable newly arrived and settled community members to develop relationships with one another; by using cooking, growing and arts activities together as social tools.

In this period we have met with existing groups at the Ecumenical centre, Skem PULSE, the Sewing Rooms,

Greenhill Community Hub and connected with networks in Skelmersdale, WellSkem, West Lancs CVS and West Lancs Buzz. We have delivered workshops at Greenhill Community Hub We have worked with 9 asylum seekers and 5 community members in creating How To recipe videos that have been shared online (257 views), cooking delicious lunches to share together and take home, trying new foods, sharing recipes from Iraq, Iran and Sudan, and beginning to plant a herb and vegetable garden.



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

Alison Moore, MRANG Director, has provided a report on their work, supported by the SAS Destitution Project:

“.....The destitution fund has been an important tool in providing service users faced with destitution temporary funds to allow them to buy food and essential items. Every person who has received the destitution fund during the above stated period has had either Section 95 or Section 4 refused. Upon receiving the destitution fund and casework support from MRANG, most of these people have been successful in having this support reinstated through appeals. This evidences our argument that destitution amongst asylum seeking women is caused by wrongful refusal of support and is avoidable. The destitution fund is therefore pivotal in allowing us to provide funds for food and essential items whilst an appeal is made to reinstate the support.

Street homelessness is another emerging trend amongst the women who have received the destitution fund during this period. As can be the case with many refused asylum seeker, homelessness and destitution are incredible dangers and expose those affected to exploitation. The fund allows us to intervene at this crucial point, providing essential funds that attempt to prevent women being exploited whilst we move to have support reinstated.

Lastly, mothers with small babies are also continuing to receive the destitution fund. Given the immense consequences upon new born babies who do not receive adequate nutrition in their formative years, being exposed to abject poverty is something that we cannot allow to happen. The destitution fund, therefore, gives us a window of time in which to either appeal Section 95 refusals and/or to work with social services to get the support needed for these mums.

Overall, throughout the cases examined, it is clear to say that the destitution fund provides us with essential funds at moments of crisis that allow us time to reinstate lasting forms of monetary support. As a tool against long term destitution it is decisive and continues to be effective.....”

Probation Service [Merseyside Community Rehabilitation Company]

Mayling Diskaya, CP Placement Coordinator - Liverpool, reports on the continuing support provided by the SAS Destitution Project:

“.....With the money received from SAS we have bought dried food supplies for each area in Merseyside Community Service Units. South Liverpool, North Liverpool, Sefton and St Helens/Knowsley. This has been extremely beneficial to our Service Users who are struggling to find additional money for food whilst they are carrying out their Community Service. This has also stopped us sending them home and aided their compliance on their Orders. Individual grants have also been issued to people with referral from their Officers; this has helped them get through their crisis and has been much appreciated.”

Mayling even managed to arrange a mention for SAS in a covering article in the Liverpool Echo!

PEOPLE carrying out Community Payback who lack enough money for lunch are benefiting from a pioneering scheme in Liverpool that provides them with food.

The Merseyside Community Rehabilitation Company (M CRC) supervises offenders sentenced to carry out unpaid work across the county.

May Diskaya, a Community Payback coordinator, approached Support for Asylum Seekers (SAS), a destitution project backed by Churches Together in the Merseyside Region.

The charity donated £1,000, which M CRC distributes to service users who are clearly in need.

M CRC's emergency fund was launched last November.

So far, 150 Pot Noodles and 50 porridges have been distributed, and 20 service users who were asylum seekers and also in acute need have been given a one-off grant to ease their plight.

There is provision that people preparing to complete unpaid work orders turn up in the right clothes and with their lunch.

May said: "It stands to reason that you cannot complete a day's Community Payback if you are hungry.



Neil Cunningham (SAS); May Diskaya, M CRC CP co-ordinator; and Steve Hay, M CRC CP supervisor, at Rice Lane City Farm, with some of the 150 Pot Noodles used to feed Community Payback participants

"We noticed that some of our service users arrive with no food. "Unpaid work is hard. "It involves people making reparation by carrying out a range of tasks to improve their communities. "We don't want people failing on their order because they are hungry. "It is terribly sad that in this day

and age we have to do this, but providing food to the hungry on Community Payback is a logical step. "The punishment isn't that people ought to be hungry, but is that people can make reparations for the crimes they have committed. "This fund helps makes that possible."

M CRC provides the right clothing for those who need it.

Tasks undertaken include helping community groups, churches, and schools with a wide range of projects from grounds maintenance through to weeding, painting and decorating and creating planters for installation in parks.

SAS coordinator, Neil Cunningham, said: "May told us about the pressing need to help people who have no money for transport to probation nor lunch.

"SAS is happy to address that need via M CRC.

"The initiative is working so well that we'd like to expand the scheme by offering fresh fruit, too.

"We are delighted to collaborate with M CRC and will continue to do so while funds permit."

May added: "I am absolutely delighted SAS has given us this support.

"We can always tell who isn't bringing food and who is genuinely struggling, and we are able to discreetly hand it out when needed."

■ Donations for SAS can be sent to: Neil Cunningham, SAS Co-ordinator for CTMR, c/o CTMR, Quaker Meeting House, 22, School Lane, Liverpool L1 3BT.

Photographic Project – Katherine Monaghan

SAS was recently asked to fund, retrospectively, an excellent photographic project by Katherine Monaghan. Ultimately a pamphlet was produced for each of 6 asylum seekers from ALM and exhibited at the Open Eye Gallery in Liverpool. Katherine explains below about the project and I have added a sample extract from Majid's pamphlet. For more on Majid's story and photographs and those of the other participants visit www.photostories.org.uk. Any requests and donations for the 6 "digital booklets" should be directed to ALM [Ewan Roberts] or myself.

".....EVERY PERSON MUST BE HUMAN by Katherine Monaghan

[In collaboration with ALM, University of Liverpool and Open Eye Gallery]

'Every Person Must Be Human', a quote used during an interview with one of the participants, is a new project of socially engaged photography from Asylum Link Merseyside service users and photographer Katherine Monaghan. The body of work aims to break down barriers of culture and language that can often

lead people to regard refugees and asylum seekers as 'Other'. It seeks to chart the everyday lives of people living in the UK, whilst engaging with the asylum process. Each person was given a disposable camera and a few weeks to take pictures of their surroundings. Through participants' photographic chronicling of the everyday - football matches, quiet sunsets and the interiors of houses - the project seeks to help people transcend some generalised ideas of what defines a refugee or asylum seeker and their individual experiences of city life....."

"...MAJID

I want to study medicine, I want to learn how people die and are born, I want to understand. Yeah that is my dream.

I have a stomach problem, for a long time, from when I was young. That is why I came to the UK. The UK probably is healthy, people said. But no hospital could tell me my problem. I said when I am doctor I will find my problem. Because I am angry with all of doctors - they said, 'this man he is bad' - yeah I know, because I am a refugee I am bad! Then I came Liverpool. Liverpool was really good for me, I found my problem. I found the hospital who washed my stomach. I did that, now I am feeling very well. So that's why I like Liverpool. Yeah I am happy here. Also, I wanted a city, I found a city for full time study...."

Support for SAS/ALM

As usual I would take this opportunity again to thank individuals, faith groups and other organisations for continuing to support the work of SAS and its local partner agencies with 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 S.A.S" or simply "CTMR SAS".

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

You can see from the testimonies from our local partner agencies of the positive support work and wellbeing activities that is being provided to arguably the most marginalised group in our community. Your continued support is greatly appreciated. Please keep in your prayers the staff, volunteers and trustees of ALM and SAS, and our local partner agencies.

May you and your families enjoy a wonderful summer break.

Neil Cunningham
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August 2018

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



Support for Asylum Seekers

**Statement of Financial Activities
for the 6 months period to 30 June 2018**

| | 6 months Total to June | 12 months Total |
|--|---|--------------------------------|
| | 2018 | 2017 |
| Incoming Resources | | |
| Grants from Organisations | 13,825 | 57,844 |
| Individual Donations | 3,149 | 9,722 |
| | 16,974 | 67,566 |
| Resources Expended | | |
| Accommodation | 13,546 | 35,452 |
| Destitution Support | 13,481 | 14,560 |
| Printing Expenses | - | 1,524 |
| Probation Grants for Asylum seekers | 3,170 | 2,490 |
| | 31,097 | 54,026 |
| Net Incoming (Outgoing) Resources | (14,123) | 13,540 |
| Fund Balances | | |
| At 31 December 2017 | 52,619 | 39,079 |
| At 30 June 2018 | 38,496 | 52,619 |
| Represented By : | | |
| Bank Bal @ 30 June 2018 | 38,496 | 52,619 |