

ANNUAL TRUSTEES REPORT Aug 2024 to April 2025

CHANGE OF GOVERNMENT

Since the election of the new government there have been some important changes.

- Asylum claims are being dealt with more speedily.
- More claims are being refused, leading to an increase in the number of appeals
- Hotel residents are, in general, staying for a much shorter period. They are quickly being 'dispersed' into shared accommodation, across the country.
- The dispersal system means we have a lot of refugees in Shared Houses, across a wide area.
- The brand-new asylum seekers, often arrive with very few possessions.

This has vastly increased the numbers of people we have supported

We have supported:

- 1) Hundreds of asylum seekers staying at a local hotel.
- 2) Many more single asylum seekers who have been dispersed to SERCO-run shared houses across North Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire. Currently we know of almost 40 people in this category.
- 3) 25 Refugee families on official settlement schemes.
- 4) 10 Single men with refugee status who have settled in Chesterfield Area.
- 5) 8 families, in Home Office accommodation organised by Serco.
- 6) 4 families settled by Sheffield City Council on a temporary basis in houses in our area.
- 7) 2 family re-union cases, awarded council accommodation, who we have helped to settle and set up home.

KEY AREAS OF WORK

ADVANCEMENT OF EDUCATION.

Learning English is a very important for all our refugees. Chesterfield College has provided excellent ESOL support. We helped with transporting refugees to the College on enrolment day and applying for bus passes. But refugees arriving after registration for September could not be accommodated at the College so we recruited new volunteers and now hold regular classes inside the hotel on Monday and Wednesday mornings. This has been vital to new arrivals who cannot go to College.

Children of established families attend a range of post 16 courses. Some longer standing refugees have now moved into vocational courses at the College. We have given support at Open Days and Evenings. The College is seeking to become a College of Sanctuary and regularly invites us to events.

Beyond Chesterfield College, we worked in conjunction with West Notts College and Bolsover Council, to establish weekly ESOL classes in Creswell and Shirebrook. We have helped asylum seekers begin courses at West Notts and North Notts Colleges. Individual volunteers have started 1:1 and small group ESOL sessions in Shirebrook, Darley Dale, North Wingfield and a women's class in Chesterfield.

Newly arrived families need support with enrolling children in school. We have also been involved in pastoral issues this year, mainly cases involving the bullying of refugee children.

.EMPLOYMENT AND RELIEF OF POVERTY and HOUSING

Employment

This year we have seen more settled refugees begin to move into jobs in retail, catering, barbering, warehouse work and driving jobs. We have helped with driving lessons, access to training like CCSC and a few have become self-employed.

Relief of poverty is undertaken in many ways. New arrivals at the hotel are provided with basics: new underwear, socks, shoes and Sim cards when we can source them. We regularly appeal for donations and a volunteer has set up and maintains a room in the hotel where shoes, coats, trousers can be accessed. The Central Methodist Church donated a large stock of clothing which was surplus to their work with Ukrainian families.

We provided basic food stuffs to people in the hotel who were being dispersed. We research the areas they are going to and direct them to food banks and refugee charitable organisations .

When refugees move into council accommodation we provide help with carpets, furniture, household goods provided by donations.

Our volunteer with a van is invaluable and refugees volunteer to help with the heavy lifting. This enables us to take donations of larger items which are distributed to everyone in need. We regularly provide help with school uniforms, children's clothes, toys, bikes and TVs.

Housing has become a major issue this year. We have delivered several workshops on housing options to men at the hotel. Asylum seekers granted 'leave to remain' are given notice to quit and must leave the hotel and shared housing. We have helped them apply for supported housing and approached local councils.

In November 2024 we held a meeting with volunteers to discuss 'short term hosting'. Two families did host homeless refugees and this support was invaluable. We have worked with local housing charities to help settle refugees. This whole transition period is very difficult and stressful. We helped two refugees to bring their families to Chesterfield, under the 'family reunion' scheme and we have given them considerable help with setting up home.

HEALTH AND WELL BEING

We regularly help with registration at the GP and dentist. Transportation to hospital appointments is often necessary, including visits to A&E. We have held seminars at the hotel to explain healthy living and how the health service works. Some of these were funded by our participation in research projects e.g. vaccination project. We delivered 2 women's health workshops to Syrian and Afghani women.

Our regular football matches on a Sunday are crucial for physical and mental health of the refugees. Financial support for family swimming sessions was provided in summer 2024. An Art Class was started at the hotel and this acted as therapy too.

We have noticed a severe decline in **mental health** due the stresses of the asylum process and situation. The increase of hostility towards refugees is not helpful.

CULTURAL AND SOCIAL ACTIVITIES

We had a summer day trip to the seaside for new families in Bolsover area, in August 2024, partly financed by St Thomas Church.

For the Refugees in the Hotel we have provided: regular days outs, walking in the local environment. We have organised visits to: Doncaster Races, Weston Park and Matlock Bath. Hardwick Hall and Shakespeare in the Park.

We have put the refugees in touch with local churches , mosques and a Sikh temple in Sheffield. During Eid we hosted an Iftar meal for 70 people.

Keen cricketers have joined local clubs. Volunteers and refugees helped at Dronfield Together Community events and enjoyed a Refugees Welcome Event in Whitwell.

At Christmas we organised Santa Sacks for the families and individual gift packs for the hotel residents and a games night at the hotel.

We have undertaken gardening tasks at the hotel, alongside the refugees to enhance their lived environment.

Individual refugees have represented our group for example at the Derbyshire County Council BME Forum. Some volunteer to help with translation , and for the Asian Association Diwali festival. We were invited to Dunston Labour Party to explain our work.

DEALING WITH OFFICIALDOM

One of our volunteers has been trained by Chesterfield Law Centre to be a legal assistant. He has assisted many of the established families with applying for citizenship, gaining fee waivers, family re-unification and on financial issues.

Increasingly, we are having to help refugees access lawyers . We work closely with Duncan Lewis Solicitors and The Derbyshire Law Centre. Several volunteers spend a great deal of time helping with e visas, Universal Credit Applications, bank accounts, etc.

With increasing numbers of refugees in the Community we began a weekly 'drop in' session in a local community centre. This helped over 24 individuals and involved 8 volunteers. They were also social events to overcome isolation.

Also we offer help dealing with the DWP and benefit claims, aided by the Derbyshire Unemployed Workers Centre. We have paid fares when refugees need to travel to meet lawyers and accompanied them when requested. We have offered advice on tenancy agreements.

Many of our long standing families have now gained full citizenship and attended ceremonies at the Town Hall.

FINANCIAL ISSUES

We mainly rely on small grants and fundraising, eg through selling donated second-hand books at local festivals. We have a small number of monthly donations. Our Chair regularly seeks financial donations from her parishioners in the Methodist community. Both our local mosques have raised collections.

Grant funding has come from different sources including; the NHS, Joined Up Care Derbyshire, Foundation Derbyshire, the Rotary Club, St Thomas Church, the County Councillor's fund.

The money has enabled us to purchase items to support our guests such as basic packages, laptops, bicycles and sports kit. We have also had support for ESOL travel, room hire and courses.

We held monthly meetings with Meetings for Volunteers alternating with Meetings for Trustees.

A VERY BIG THANK YOU to all our Trustees and Volunteers, and to the **Refugees and Asylum Seekers**, who have delivered so much this year. We have not included names in the report, as **EVERYONE** is valued.

We are a small charity with no paid employees and rely on volunteers and working in partnership , with many local organisations.

THANKS TO OUR PARTNERS and DONORS

Our partnership with a number of local organisations has been invaluable: LINKS CVS, DCC BME Forum, Derbyshire Unemployed Workers Centre, Derbyshire Law Centre, Whittington Moor Methodist Church, Central Methodist Church, Chesterfield Muslim Welfare Organisation, Chesterfield Muslim Association, Baby Basics, Saffron Kitchen,

Sene-Gambia Association, Chesterfield College ESOL team. Chesterfield Football Club, Central Cooperative Society, Monkey Park Café, VERBA, Cherished, Community Psychiatric Nurses Association. Chesterfield Rotary Club, Joined Up Care Derbyshire, Foundation Derbyshire, St Thomas' Church, the County Councillors Fund, Bolsover Council, Monkey Park Café, Dronfield Together.

Date	Donation	Collection BME	Grants	Sales	Other	Total
April	310		109.75	3070	1.23	3490.98
May	60				165	114.36
June	360		87.12		1.62	448.74
July	60		47.37		0.64	108.01
August	940		50		150.31	1140.31
September	60		200		350	61.48
October	60		62.5			4.02
November	160		31.25	1237	600.45	2088.7
December	289.76		21	1269		1579.76
January	60		20	4546.92	0.02	4626.94
February	60		26	1950	0.93	2036.93
March	347.5		22.12	100	373	0.21
Totals	2767.26	0	677.11	12172.92	888	935.27
						17500.56

Opening Balance	3986.1
Income	17500.56
Sub Total	21486.66
Expenditure	15659.18
Closing Balance	5827.48

Date	Refugees	Transport	Room hire	Insurance	Charges	Translatio	Other	Total
April	421.68				9		247	677.68
May	611.03				10.4			621.43
June	206.68				7.8		5.6	220.08
July	1253.41			569.32	8.4			1831.13
August	692.39	163.8			10.1			866.29
Sept	1197.76	910.5			11.7		60	1979.96
Oct	820.79	40					12.4	873.19
Nov								0
Dec							6.83	6.83
Jan	264.16							264.16
Feb	2883.51		1822		7.4			4712.91
March	3164.36	51.74	140		8	200	41.42	3605.52
Totals	115615.8	1166.04	1962	569.32	72.8	200	373.25	15659.18