

PAFRAS

Amount Awarded — £74,000 Henry Smith

PAFRAS support destitute refugee and asylum seekers in Leeds. Many are unable to return to their own countries for fear of persecution, torture or death. They are in a catch 22 position, unable to return home, yet with no rights to work and provide food and shelter for themselves and their families. Left in limbo, they are forced towards homelessness and starvation.

It is estimated that there are roughly 3,000 asylum seekers in Leeds. They are, in effect “non-citizens”. The psychological effect on these people cannot be underestimated and the team often see people who have attempted suicide or self-harmed. Some have serious medical conditions without access to healthcare, compounded by homelessness.

PAFRAS do a fantastic job combating problems that these people experience. They run a drop-in centre 2 days a week, for 3 hours on Tuesdays and Thursdays which is regularly attended by 40 people at each session, many of them women and children. They are able to come in for a hot meal, meet up with others in the same situation as them, take some of the donated clothes to wear and in addition, a food parcel of dried goods. At the same time, they can also have a meeting with Christine, the full-time project co-ordinator or Martha, the Destitution Support Worker. They provide all important emotional and practical support, as well as finding legal representation that is needed to challenge the refusal of their asylum application. A local dietician from a nearby hospital prepares meals, which are specifically catered for rough sleepers, high in vitamin content and full of nutrition. Blankets and Sleeping Bags are given out at the drop in as well. In 2007 PAFRAS received 4,480 visits to the drop in, served 4,000 hot meals and provided 2,000 food parcels. So far in 2008 they have received 4,000 visits which is set to rise to 6,000 by the end of the year.

With a grant of £28,000 a year PAFRAS were able to fund their full-time Project Worker and a part-time Destitution Support Worker to continue their vital work. Through raising awareness and giving talks within the local community and the city of Leeds, PAFRAS has now 38 churches supporting them with food toiletries and clothing.

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