

AGM. Tuesday June 5th. 2018.

Good afternoon all. Firstly, some housekeeping, we are not expecting a fire alarm so if we hear an alarm we will vacate. There are 3 exits, firstly where you came in, secondly, downstairs and through fire exit at rear and finally through the church along this level in opposite direction to the way you entered.

Also, I'd like thank representatives of like minded organisations who have attended. They've brought some info leaflets from their organisations and these are on the table over there. I'm sure they will welcome any questions afterwards whilst we are having our food and drink at the end of our AGM.

Since I spoke to you last year, I'm pleased to be able to tell you we are even busier, although of course I would rather that we didn't need to exist.

As most of you know, we are set up to help asylum seekers, refugees, failed asylum seekers and their families. We provide a loving and safe environment.

For those who have not attended one of our drop-ins, we run a well-attended Wednesday drop-in. For example, in the last three months an average of 154 have attended our drop-in These are from 41 different countries.

We offer all day tea, coffee, water, biscuits and fruit.

At lunchtime we all sit down to a healthy hot meal cooked on the premises, by Alan and his team from The Bolton Mutual Aid Centre. They average 150 servings a session, and sometimes 200, and during Ramadan the food is offered in take away containers for later consumption. I think you'll agree that 8,000 cooked meals during the year is a considerable achievement.

We have a free barber on site.

Everyone can access the clothes room for clothes, shoes, back packs, bedding, sheets, duvets, push chairs and prams.

Everyone can access our caseworker, via our trained triage team, [you'll hear more from her later].

For those most destitute we provide a week's groceries, toiletries and baby items, sometimes enough for the five members of a family.

We supply transport costs to those let down by the system and with no means to attend important Home Office tribunals.

We run many English classes of which you'll hear more.

We have a full-size table tennis table, two pool tables, two football tables and an air hockey table.

We run an art class at each drop-in.

The BHA visit us monthly. They help with HIV and Sexual Health matters and have a stall and a separate room for confidential consultation and testing.

During the year we've run an Arts and Design programme, whereby card making, and other design techniques were taught and practiced.

We are currently running a flower arranging class.

We're running a bicycle repair class led by Transport for Manchester. At the end of the course we will be supplying helmets and locks.

We've hosted here two plays from the Octagon with whom we have strong links. Indeed, the most recent dramatic piece performed here by our ladies was as a result of the Octagon combining with our ladies and ladies of other organisations, over 20 weeks, to encourage their talents in lullabies, songs stories and poetry. On July 4th, we will be hosting the Octagon Academy's latest touring play "Lena's Logged Off".

We've had many outings some of which I'll mention in a minute.

Everything is free to our lovely service users and we are all volunteers except our part time funded caseworker.

There are two components without which we would not exist.

Firstly, our volunteers give many many hours of love, kindness and commitment. So, it's my pleasure to thank them on behalf of all of those they help. Thank you so much.

Secondly, the generosity of our funders and donors. It gives me enormous pleasure to note our grateful thanks to: -

The John Grant Davies Trust

The Sisters of the Cross and Passion

The Parishioners of Bolton Parish Church

The Swan Mountain Trust

The Pat Newman Trust

The Scott Trust

The Society of the Holy Child Jesus

The Provincial Walsh Trust

The 29th. May 1961 Charitable Trust

The Hilden Trust

The Jill Franklin Trust

The Mary Strand Trust

Bolton Christian Cohesion Project

The IGEN Trust.

The Portia Pia 2012 Foundation.

Bill Webster and Bolton College.

And all our other donors, many anonymous.

The Wednesday Drop-In is only part of what we do. We help on the other 6 days in areas such as:

Casework, Shaheda will mention this in her report.

Food: - We collect and deliver food and bread to the Project on Monday from Warburtons, on Tuesday evening from Tesco and Fridays from FareShare.

Emmaus: - We regularly take our service users on Sunday to Emmaus to source a cheap reconditioned bike.

Bolton Wanderers: - We took 30 or so by coach to watch the mighty Whites on three occasions.

Lord Mayor's Parlour: - We took a group for a private look at the Mayor's office and tea with the Mayor

Outreach Teaching: - We encourage our service users to attend other venues where our volunteers also teach.

We have given presentations about our work at many groups, schools and churches.

Cammela one of our service users and now a volunteer English teacher had her own fashion show in Manchester which we attended.

We arranged with the Octagon for a group of service users to tour the Theatre including all the behind the scenes areas

Colleges, Universities: - we always attend when one of our service users receives an award.

On many occasions we have taken our service users to the Library and helped them access their services.

We've attended many doctor's surgeries, hospital appointments and once A and E. with our service users and when needed with our own translators. We've also registered them with doctors and dentists and taken them to emergency dentists for treatment and completed their HC1 and HC2 forms. We do our best to ensure their rights to medical attention are protected.

We've collected clothes, bikes, pushchairs, prams, pool tables and other useful items from around Bolton, Manchester and Wigan and delivered to our project.

We've delivered food to those who are entitled but are unable to attend on a Wednesday.

We've delivered push chairs, prams, cookers, TVs, fridges, freezers, beds, and other heavy items to our service users accommodation.

We've accompanied service users to the Jobcentre, to register or often to protect their rights and reclaim monies incorrectly deducted and ensure incorrect sanctions are lifted.

We've accompanied them to school uniform suppliers to buy uniforms paid for by anonymous donors

We've taken and accompanied our service users many times to Banks, Citizen Advice Bureaux, One Stop and once to an Embassy in Manchester.

We've delivered our hand made gifts to our new mums with many other baby items.

We've sent thank you letters and our handmade cards to donors, so far 193 cards have been sent.

We meet our clients away from the drop-in and help prepare their C.V.'s

Our teachers spend many hours sourcing and preparing lessons.

We come in on other days to help clean our rooms and power wash the yard and complete many DIY jobs.

We take all our rubbish to the tip and take and recycle our cardboard and waste food.

Again, I must applaud our volunteers and their magnificent commitment and love without which we would not be here.

New Initiatives: - Last Summer saw our website up and running and made our group accessible on social media via FaceBook This has helped us better serve our client's needs. The website is www.boltondp.org

Fridays: - We are soon to open here a Friday Caseworker clinic to further enhance the benefits we offer to our clients.

RFID [Radio Frequency I.D.] We hope in the coming months to introduce an ID system at reception. This will enable our service users to swipe in, making it easier for reception, but more importantly allow us to know how many are in the building at any time and with other supplied info [all within GDPR, of course 😊] will allow us to better calculate ways to help our service users.

Starting soon: - Our Gardening and Allotment project,
and Climbing Walls days at Bolton One in association with Wave.

Finally, may I congratulate our caseworker Shaheda who was recently nominated for an award at the annual Inspire Women awards. She survived all the shortlisting preliminary examinations to be a finalist at the presentation evening but was not the actual award winner. It's quite an achievement to have been nominated let alone shortlisted as a finalist so a warm round of applause is deserved, I think.