

Destitution Project Impact Report Oct - Dec 2024

Food Support: parcels Destitute Asylum Seekers (DAS) incl unregistered DAS: 25 Asylum Seekers: 655	Food support financial: Food parcels: £7820 Vouchers: £70 Emergency funding: medical, essential travel, accommodation, cash support. £146.24
Casework sessions Face to face: 12 Remote: 149 Walk-in: 69 New Service Users registered: 1 Files closed: 0 Active asylum cases: 174	Drop in Attendance Total: 938 Average: 85
Agencies that Destitution Project (DP) has connected with: NACCOM, Refugee Action, Red Cross, Migrant Help, Bolton SERCO Housing, Mental Help Support workers, Solicitors, GMCA (Gt Mc Combined Authority) Bolton Council Migrants Multi-agency Group, Probation and GP services; Rotary, local Faith groups and schools, organisations supporting with E-visa transitioning, Rainbow Haven (RH)	
Key learning to take forward	

CASEWORK:

Introduction of e-visas for refugees and requirement to replace biometric cards by Dec 24 has placed heavy demand on casework time in terms of familiarising with procedures and advising and guiding refugees impacted

Single people newly granted refugee status becoming homeless/sofa-surfing because of: local and national housing shortage; unaffordable deposits for rented accomm (HO Integration loan for refugees not enough). Insufficient night shelter provision.

HO temporary extension to the move-on period from asylum accommodation from 28 days to 56 days for those with a positive asylum decision from 9th December 2024 is positive BUT only applies until June 2025 AND several new refugees have not received the extension which has meant casework time spent overturning this to 56 days, getting Aspen card money reimbursed (which gets blocked after 28 days), by making a complaint to the Home Office.

Ensuring refugees newly granted Leave to Remain AND new to DP are aware of casework department is key. Timely assistance means they can be restored to the asylum house while onward accommodation is arranged thus avoiding homelessness. Without this the only assistance we can provide is housing information/ DP food parcels/clothing/sleeping blanket etc.

Migrant Help response time: when the issue is reported via email, we are receiving an automated email saying that they aim to respond after 10 days! by which time, eviction takes place leaving single new refugees destitute. DP and several other organisations have made a complaint to the Home Office regarding this current problem.

DROP-IN

Road closure on Ridgway Gate due to building works makes receiving donations and Morrisons Food deliveries a challenge

Consistently high attendance 80+ and demand for food parcels at 50 - 60 per week is placing pressure on the budget

Having to move heavy items e.g. pool table in order to set up and pack away is creating H&S issues around manual handling. Items will need to be replaced which is another budgetary pressure

GOVERNANCE / MANAGEMENT The value of building relationships - support received from RH in planning our Ops Development Manager recruitment.

Case Studies

1.

P is an asylum seeker from Palestine and has been registered for casework support at DP since 2019 under his parents asylum claim as an adult. The home office granted his parents refugee status in October 2021 but P's case was refused so he submitted a further application.

On becoming refugees P's parents were moved from the SERCO accommodation into a hotel whilst waiting for social housing as refugees. P was evicted from the SERCO accommodation, did not qualify to stay in the hotel and became homeless forcing him to sofa surf for over 10 months.

Our caseworker and P's solicitor pursued the Home Office for a decision on his further submission (pending since 2021!). The home office confirmed the further submission application outstanding (with Asylum Flow, Children and Complex -AFCC), have been unable to give a timescale for a decision. In the meantime advised that P can proceed to Judicial Review issued in the Upper Tribunal and provided details. However P has not been able to do so as he can not afford the solicitor and the barrister fees!! This has left him with stress, anxiety and depression. He is seeking medical help.

In addition to pressing for a decision our caseworker made an application to the home office for his weekly money support. As a result of our interventions P has his support and is now able to stay with his parents at their permanent house. We are still waiting for a decision to be made by the Home Office on his asylum case.

2.

T is from Iraq/Kurdish and had booked an appointment to see me in November via his probation officer. He was granted a refugee status 5 years since, had a house, was working full time and had a settled life. During this time he was decorating his house and went to the DIY shop to get his some painting material. He had a paper cutter blade in his pocket and while walking to the DIY shop, he was stopped and searched by the police (random stop and search). He was not aware that he cannot carry a sharp blade in a public place. This led to him being arrested and imprisoned and other complications due to his health.

When he was released from prison his refugee status had been revoked and **he had no support**. He was living with a friend in Bolton and had to follow the probation conditions and report to the Home Office once a week. Probation officers are not trained to deal with immigration work so our caseworker assisted him in reapplying for asylum again and Section 95 support. He is still waiting for a home office interview. He is unable to work as this has had a big impact on his physical and mental health therefore has not applied for permission to work.

3

In December J from Vietnam came in to see me as a walk - in service user. She looked scared and anxious. I sat with her in a confidential space and spoke to her via a Vietnamese interpreter over the phone. J disclosed that she had come to the UK on the promise of a job which turned out to be modern slavery. She had escaped; the police had referred her to social services and she was living in a safe house in Bolton. She was not aware of immigration rules and had no ID on her. She was distressed and traumatized

Our caseworker immediately made an urgent NRM application (National Referral Mechanism/adult), and contacted her social worker to give her the details of the NRM and what the next step would be. Our caseworker explained the NRM procedures to P, that she would be taken to a safe place (anywhere in the country), and an NRM caseworker (specialist in modern day slavery) will assist her/provide financial support and contact the Home Office if she wishes to claim asylum or do voluntary return back to her country. We were later informed by NRM that she was picked up the same day they received my application and was moved to Liverpool. We usually don't get any further updates once they are moved out of Bolton. We can only hope that she is safe and rebuilding her life wherever she is.....

