

Destitution Project Impact Report Jan - March 2024

Food Support: parcels Destitute Asylum Seekers (DAS) incl unregistered DAS: 4 Asylum Seekers: 627	Food support financial: Food parcels: £72567 Vouchers - £160 Emergency funding: medical, essential travel, accommodation, cash support. £179.22
Casework sessions Face to face: 23 Remote: 165 Walk-in: 66 New Service Users registered: 3 Files closed: 0 Active asylum cases: 175	Drop in Attendance Total: 933 Average: 72
Agencies that Destitution Project (DP) has connected with: NACCOM, Refugee Action, Red Cross, Migrant Help, Bolton SERCO Housing, Abdullam Housing Association Mental Help Support workers, Solicitors, GMCA (Gt Mc Combined Authority) Bolton Council Migrants Multi-agency Group, Probation and GP services	

Key learning to take forward

- Recent practice of giving only 7 days' notice of eviction to asylum seekers newly granted Leave to Remain has now been overturned and is now back to 28 days but SERCO are enforcing this strictly as they are under pressure from Home Office (HO) to house new asylum seekers who are currently in hotels. Social housing/night shelter only available for families with minors and those with serious medical condition/doctor's medical report. Re the latter, some are not made aware until they have sought assistance. Majority of single men cannot access night shelter (Bolton Council Housing Options do not have a duty of care) leading to rough sleeping outside town hall. They have been asked to move on by the Police leading to confrontations and arrests. One single female refugee got into the Bolton shelter, but there was no separate room so she was offered a place with single men!! Due to her vulnerability, with our caseworkers help, she was placed elsewhere.
- Decline in legal aid immigration solicitors nationwide and inability to afford fees means thousands of asylum seekers have no legal aid representative. This seriously jeopardises outcomes; inability to submit an appeal due to lack of representation can lead to destitution, especially with the accommodation crisis.
- The impact at DP is that some service users demand urgent attention and challenge the fact that we cannot provide accommodation and cannot signpost to legal aid solicitors. This is an indication of their situation and vulnerability.
- Community Cost of Living grant award has covered food support for the period so we are still able to supply food parcels to all asylum seekers.
- A few SUs have recently requested to sign up as helpers and some are transitioning to volunteer status. For those with English as a second language, introducing H&S visuals is making the H&S induction easier. Where necessary for safeguarding induction we use interpreters.
- Generous donations of clothing and household goods very welcome but sorting adds to the Wednesday workload

Case study

S is from Kazakhstan. She came to the UK on a student visa and met a man who was a refugee at the time; they married Islamically. He now has a British passport. S later claimed asylum as she was unable to return back to her country due to religious/political reasons. The solicitor submitted the case to the Home office. Home Office refused her case; it was heard at an appeal stage in court and again refused

She has to return to Kazakhstan and her husband will have to apply for a spouse visa for her to enter back into the UK. She has received support from DP throughout including: casework support included; liaising with the solicitor, referral to the mental health/therapy/ GP and provision of a supporting letter. She is currently still here as she is scared to return back to her country due to persecution.

We are not sure what will happen next.....

T is from Eritrea and in her fifty's and has had help with her asylum case at DP since 2016. She has had multiple refusals from the Home Office and the court and received an eviction notice every time. On each occasion our caseworker submitted an appeal on medical grounds and was able to get her reinstated before the eviction date. However, on the last occasion the appeal was submitted late due to circumstances beyond our caseworker's control. Home Office eventually granted accommodation after a fresh asylum case was submitted. She was moved out of Bolton and is currently living in Home Office accommodation in Manchester.

She is now waiting for the Home Office to make a decision on her case.