

Destitution Project Impact Report April - June 2024

Food Support: parcels

Destitute Asylum Seekers (DAS)
incl unregistered DAS: **11**
Asylum Seekers: **701**

Food support financial:

Food parcels: **£8,188**
Vouchers: **£40**
Emergency funding: medical, essential travel, accommodation, cash support.
£322.95

Casework sessions

Face to face: **18**
Remote: **152**
Walk-in: **54**
New Service Users registered: **1**
Files closed: **3**
Active asylum cases: **171**

Drop in Attendance

Total: **894**
Average: **69**

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

Key learning to take forward

The Asylum and Immigration Bill (that we all refer to as the Rwanda Bill) passed in April this year created a great deal of anxiety especially amongst single males arriving in this country after 1st January 2022. This excludes minors but an additional challenge is where unaccompanied minors were being incorrectly classed as adults. Many of our service users are single males and the run up to the Bill being passed and the period after saw an increase in queries related to Rwanda.

The threat of homelessness and being sent to Rwanda created huge anxieties across asylum and refugee communities. Keeping abreast of these changes in law and procedure in order to give accurate information and support is a challenge. Fortunately we have access to networks who can provide briefings and updates, such as NACCOM (No Accommodation Network), but the amount to be read, understood and processed places a big time demand on casework time.

Increase in anxiety in the asylum/refugee community has led to some challenging behaviours e.g. refugees not accepting that we cannot provide accommodation; AS challenging that we cannot signpost them to a legal aid solicitor. This means that there now has to be a continual trustee presence in Casework throughout the day for safeguarding. To try to also maintain oversight at Drop-in Trustees have set up a rota which provides some (but not total) extra cover. Moves are in place to appoint one of our key volunteers as an employee to have an oversight role.

Rise in demand for food parcels over the period (with a spike of 73 one week). We have reduced parcel content (no longer provide onions and potatoes). Spot checks on residency showed we had some attendees from Manc (gaining entry by presenting the address of a friend with a Bolton Address). As a result now require SUs to present a hard copy of phone pic whole SERCO contract (showing SU name and address).

Increase in number of SUs with little English language and the demand for lessons current learners can now receive just one lesson (previously had attended multiple lessons).

Case study

L is from Sudan. He had received food support and other DP services at our Drop-in for many years. Casework support began in 2017.

In 2020 just before Covid outbreak, his asylum case was refused and he became a destitute asylum seeker but was eligible for accommodation due to the government's emergency measures on homelessness during the pandemic. DP's caseworker assisted with his application (working remotely). It was accepted, however, he was moved out of Bolton to Leeds where he completed a further submission on his case. In April this year he got in touch to let us know he had received leave to remain/refugee status; had moved back to Bolton as he had contacts here (this was his first Sudanese community since he left the war in Sudan); that he is well settled in Bolton and is now working in a warehouse. L came into DP to say hello and to thank DP for all the help and support we gave him over the years!

A is Kurdish from Iraq. His casework support began in 2016 but he had received support from the Drop-in prior to that. He received refugee status just a few years ago; is working in a factory making electrical goods and is now married. He is unable to go back to Iraq (Kurdish region) as his family were all killed during the war; he misses them dearly and lives with this trauma. He continues to receive counselling sessions.....

Z is a young adult from Egypt; he started accessing DP in April 2024. His case was complex. When we started giving him casework support it came to light that he had two court cases pending: one was awaiting a court hearing for being in possession of 29 bags of cannabis wearing a tag at the time. For this case had a legal aid solicitor in Manchester.

The other case was from the Home Office under the Illegal Entry into the UK Act. For this he was struggling to get a solicitor under Legal Aid and therefore his case kept getting adjourned from Bolton crown court.

When this information came to light it was immediately shared with trustees and Z got placed on Secure Support as per our safeguarding procedure (this stipulates that all appointments will be monitored by the safeguarding officer/ a trustee to avoid lone working).

Z was given all our DP casework procedures in Arabic translation and he signed the procedures and consent form before casework began. As a registered case he repeatedly failed to follow our procedures for contacting the caseworker, booking appointments and arriving on time despite being warned of possible consequences

with the assistance of an Arabic interpreter. Having arrived an hour late for an appointment and being informed that the caseworker was busy with another appointment there followed an incident which could have put other team members and service users at risk. As a result the decision was taken to bar him from attending the Drop-in in future. DP's Safeguarding Office later spoke to him over the phone using an Arabic interpreter explaining that he was barred and the reasons why.

Z was sent notice of his case closure in Arabic via post.

He now remains on DP's barred list; if he tries to gain our electronic registration system will alert the team and a trustee will escort him out of the building. Keeping other service users, volunteers and staff safe is a priority!