

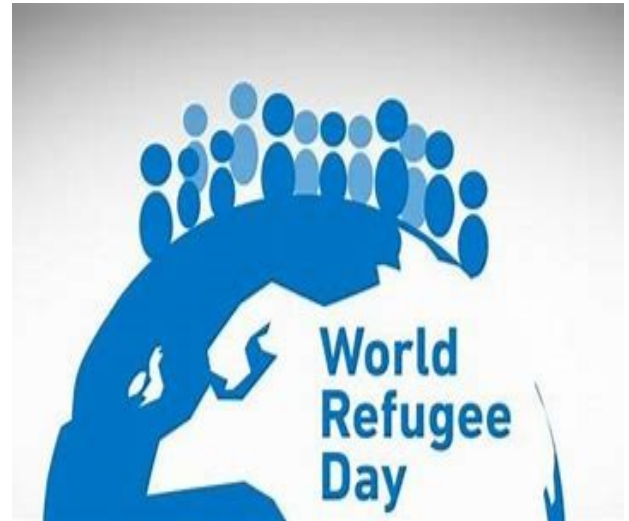
## **News from the Refugee Support Group in Lockdown**

*By Lucy Irvin*

**Diocesan Refugee Support Group  
Facilitator**

Since the start of the lockdown response to the COVID-19 pandemic eleven weeks ago, the work of the Diocesan Refugee Support Group has been paused. However, we continue to be concerned for the welfare of those who are seeking sanctuary as refugees and asylum seekers here in the UK. Organisations and individuals across the Diocese have not stopped working to offer their support in this unprecedented time of uncertainty in spite of the disruption to normal routines and circumstances. Inevitably, the reality for many refugees and asylum seekers in recent weeks has been an even greater isolation than usual as the closure of drop-ins and schools, exacerbated by heightened anxiety, has caused them, and their children, to remain largely confined to the home for weeks at a time.

The Home Office have temporarily suspended reporting requirements and paused the 'substantive' interviews for asylum seekers but this will only increase the already significant delays in the processing of applications. It will also be more difficult to prepare a fresh claim whilst it is not possible for asylum seekers to visit solicitors or have face to face meetings with case workers. Support organisations are doing their best to help, offering telephone support, providing updated information online and encouraging their users to access classes and meetings using Zoom.



For destitute asylum seekers there was some relief when, on the 26 March, the Government wrote to local authorities in England asking them to house all people sleeping rough, and those in hostels and night shelters, as soon as possible. There is of course, now uncertainty as to when this support will be removed and what will be offered as an alternative, if any.

As far as refugee resettlement goes, the UK government has now reached its target by resettling 20,007 refugees by March 2020. There is a new scheme to resettle a further 5,000 refugees during 2020-21 though new arrivals to the UK are currently suspended because of travel restrictions. Prior to lockdown, a number of Parishes in the Diocese had expressed considerable interest in the Community Sponsorship scheme but this work has also been paused.



## News from across the Diocese

**St Monica's Housing** continues to support a number of destitute asylum seeker women who are currently living in two houses. The women have been staying safe at home with volunteers bringing them cash and food parcels each week. The house committees have kept in touch with the women by text and phone, allowing for necessary house repairs and additional support to be provided as and when necessary. With the ongoing restrictions for some members of the committee, if there are any willing volunteers who might be able to help the team then please get in touch with John McLaughlin on [jmclj2@hotmail.com](mailto:jmclj2@hotmail.com).



**Gianna Baby Bank Plus**, have been exceptionally busy during lockdown. If you follow their Facebook page, you will have seen pictures of prams and pushchairs, cots and Moses baskets being delivered to expectant mothers and newly arrived families across the Diocese. Whilst not being able to make their usual home visits, they have kept in touch with regular phone calls to families, received updates from clients and maintained contact with other support agencies. They have continued to receive some very generous donations throughout and one week four fabulous prams were delivered to their new owners in Huddersfield, Dewsbury, Bradford & Settle.



**WYDAN (West Yorkshire Destitute Asylum Network)** has decided to wind up its operations following the establishment of regional NACCOM (No Accommodation) hubs. The local NACCOM hub, West Yorkshire and Humberside, has essentially replaced WYDAN's networking function.

**The WYDAN Night Shelter** closed, not long after the start of lockdown, with the handing over of the guests to the local authority for accommodation and food. While there were some difficulties initially, the guests have appreciated having their own rooms with a wash basin in each. However, it is not clear how long local authority support will last, nor when, or if, night shelter provision might be resumed, though WYDAN would like to do this if possible.

As an alternative, the group are looking to provide housing rather than the night shelter and are currently in the process of setting up a new charity, Leeds Destitute Asylum-seeker Support (LEDAS), to do this. Please see article on LEDAS by Tony Pickles.

**The Good Shepherd Centre** in Keighley is currently closed to visitors but working by phone on many issues. They continue to receive donations of clothing, household goods & furniture which are being delivered on request to families in need. The Centre is getting referrals from various agencies in Keighley & across the District. Two families had house fires so van loads of household equipment were delivered and a newly arrived asylum seeker family received furniture & household goods. Food donations from various groups in the area have been distributed to families known to the Centre as vulnerable.

**The St Vincent's centre** in Leeds is closed to visitors but has been busy delivering over 1,000 meals a week to those in need. Debt advice appointments are available by phone.



**Bradford City of Sanctuary** joined with the University of Bradford to organise a collaborative art project, '**This is Me**', in anticipation of Refugee Week. The exhibition which can now be found online at <https://www.thisismeexhibition.co.uk/> showcases work done by the students of two of our Catholic Secondary schools, **Holy Family Keighley and St Bede's and St Joseph's Catholic College**, as well as from Bradford Academy and Oasis Academy Lister Park.

**You might also be interested in the following:**

**Refugee Week 2020 is celebrated from 15 to 21 June** is going ahead but mostly with online zoom gatherings, quizzes, conferences, art shows and competitions. For details of the events planned across the UK go to <https://refugeeweek.org.uk/events/> and for those in Leeds in particular please go to <https://migrationpartnership.org.uk/refugee-week-2020-full-programme/>.

An article by **Dr Anna Rowlands**, from Durham University, titled 'Living in a time out of shape' found on Thinking Faith, the online journal of the Jesuits in Britain, <https://www.thinkingfaith.org/articles/living-time-out-shape>. In the light of our current situation, Dr Rowlands reflects on her recent research with refugees and asylum seekers and their awareness of time; time lost, time distorted and time well spent. "(Refugees) know acutely what it is like to lose your everyday markers of time and have to reinvent them."

**Foster Care Fortnight 2020** took place from 11 to 24 May 2020 and Welcoming Young Refugees at Migration Yorkshire launched a new guide to Fostering young refugees called Making a Difference: becoming a foster carer. The guide provides lots of helpful information and you can download the guide at <https://www.migrationyorkshire.org.uk/?page=wyr-iaminterested#wyrguide>.

A summary of the latest **Policy Update** which offers an overview of the latest statistics, policy and research on migration issues affecting partner organisations in Yorkshire and Humber can be found on Migration Yorkshire's website: <https://www.migrationyorkshire.org.uk/?page=NewsView&itemid=428>

## LEDAS – Leeds Destitute Asylum-seeker Support

*By Tony Pickles*

### LEDAS Trustee and parishioner St John Henry Newman Parish Leeds.

As this week is Refugee Week, I would like to let you know about a new venture starting in Leeds. It is **Leeds Destitute Asylum-seeker Support (LEDAS)**. We have set it up in response to the Covid-19 pandemic, which has meant the closure of night shelters for asylum seekers at least for the foreseeable future. WYDAN (West Yorkshire Destitute Asylum Network) agreed in March to wind-up as a networking organisation and its trustees asked some of its Night Shelter Steering Group to set up a new charity to continue provision for asylum seekers in Leeds.

As you will see from the information below, we are seeking to provide housing rather than night shelters, as it is currently impossible to provide safe conditions for guests and volunteers in the shelters which move from venue to venue. It does not look as if the need for distancing, isolation and good washing facilities will cease for a long time to come.

We are therefore looking for suitable housing, and we are approaching you, to ask if you know of any unused housing which might be available in Leeds. We are looking for property which the council or an individual owns, and they will continue to own but which they might allow us use for an agreed period. In return we would pay council tax and utilities, make sure the property was occupied and looked after, and carry out such renovations within our means to ensure the property is safe and in good condition. The use of the property would be carefully overseen by LEDAS trustees and volunteers and would be on a free of charge basis for the residents.

So, how did this come about, well two things have happened recently:

1. WYDAN (West Yorkshire Destitute Asylum Network) passed a proposal at its AGM in March to wind up its operations because of the establishment of regional NACCOM (No Accommodation) hubs. These are created as a network of asylum-seeker support organisations and they replace WYDAN's networking function.
2. And then, COVID-19, which led to the closing of the night shelter and the handing over of the guests to the local authority for accommodation and food. While there were some difficulties, the guests have been pleased to have their own rooms with a wash basin in each. One had COVID symptoms and was isolated in a small hotel in Leeds where he recovered. It is not clear how long local authority support can last, nor when or if night shelter provision might be resumed, though the Night Shelter Committee would like to do this if possible.



Following the decision to wind up WYDAN, members of its Night Shelter Steering Group were asked to set up a new charity which would have as its central aim the provision of accommodation and support for destitute asylum seekers. The advent of Covid-19 has led us to focus on the setting up of housing, based on two family-style houses to cater for 8 individuals whilst they are seeking fresh evidence in pursuit of their asylum claim.



**We need to do so without delay**, because in the light of the pandemic, the provision of opportunities to isolate, in separate rooms and to have adequate washing and hygiene facilities is and will be paramount.

Being in a house will also facilitate the opportunity for residents to have accommodation for daytime as well as overnight, giving them more stability to pursue their asylum claims, improve their general health and well being and have more independence. The constitution and application form for the new charity have been presented to the Charity Commission. The new charity is called LEDAS – Leeds Destitute Asylum-seeker Support.

Please let us know if you would like to volunteer, contribute, and be placed on our mailing list so that you can be kept informed of our progress.

Also we would be delighted to hear any questions you might have, as we have found that people's questions help shape our thinking.

Thank you for your support for destitute asylum seekers in Leeds.

Trustees of LEDAS are Gillian Tober, Jenny Willison, Sally Brown, Tony Pickles and Matt Thornfield

For further information please contact [info@ledas.org.uk](mailto:info@ledas.org.uk)

Tel: 0113 2600844

#### How You Can Help:

- Can you help or know of someone who could help source suitable properties in Leeds? We need two houses in the first instance, preferably each with at least four bedrooms, kitchen, lounge, preferably more than one bathroom and separate lavatory, front and back door, a small garden or yard.
- Are you able to provide DIY skills to help make the houses ready?
- Can you donate furniture, white goods and other household items?
- Would you volunteer as a befriender, translator, can you teach cooking, English or computer skills, or first aid?
- Would you be able to donate financially?

## WAS JESUS IN FAVOUR OF A UNIVERSAL BASIC INCOME?

By Joe Burns

### Treasurer J&P Leeds

I recently sat in on a Citizens UK training Zoom meeting about campaigning during the current pandemic. In a breakout 'room' about 30 of us listened to Mike Pugh talk about the idea of a Universal Basic Income (UBI). He was very enthusiastic and enthused those who had joined this breakout group – with plenty of interaction by way of questions using the chat facility in Zoom. The concept is to give every adult a weekly income of between £60 to £100. This would not replace other benefits -though there might be some level of change in what is offered. Even £100 per week is not enough for people to live on – so it is not a replacement for working.



This was a session that was specifically aimed at people in faith communities who campaign on issues of social justice. So, why should we be interested in the idea of a Universal Basic income – what has this to do with Christianity?

I could go on about the 'dignity' that every person has through being part of God's creation. However, I also think that the Gospel parable of the labourers in the vineyard (Matt 20:1-16) is a relevant one.

The vineyard owner goes early in the morning to the marketplace to hire day labourers – or, in our terms, zero contract hours workers. He offers them one denarius a day (which is what Roman soldiers were paid for a day – and the people listening would know that this was a reasonable amount to be paid). He does the same thing at various points in the day – including when there was only a short time available to work. He pays them all the same amount.

This is where we get stuck on the seeming injustice of paying those who have been working since daybreak the same amount as those who have only been working an hour or two. How can it be right to pay these feckless people who have only done an hour or two's work the same amount as those who started at the crack of dawn? I think we must see it through the eyes of the people of the time. Who are these people hanging around in the late afternoon and still available for work? Clearly, they are the people who no one wants to hire – those who are old, or with some form of infirmity that means they will not be able to work as productively as those hired early in the morning.

But why pay these latter the same amount? I've seen various suggestions as to how much they were all paid- but most scholars seem agreed that the daily amount was enough to feed yourself and probably your dependents. In other words the vineyard owner does not offer the minimum wage but a real living wage - or you could even term it a 'family wage' (or 'household wage'). Giving everyone the same amount – and an amount that is enough to keep you going – sounds pretty close to a UBI story of the times.

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Just like the UBI proposals outlined in the UK Citizens session, it would not cover all your living expenses but would be enough to stop you from going under. The ideas behind a Universal Basic Income need much more working out. However, it was pointed out that where small experiments had been tried it was found that nearly everyone used the money 'responsibly' (however you want to define that) and that it was no disincentive to doing paid work. What it did do was to give people some choices – and lack of choice is one of the defining characteristics of poverty and an inability to live out our lives with our God-given dignity.

Coronavirus has made many people think and comment about a 'new normal' once the pandemic is properly under control. For many reasons, Universal Basic Income is a good candidate for what would make for a 'New Normal' and a more equitable world.

This article does not go into the detail of how, practically, a Universal Basic Income might be implemented and what associated changes there might be to other parts of the benefits systems. There is considerable debate about these things! Two websites that provide more information and opportunities to become more involved are:-

Basic Income UK is a movement building up support for the implementation of a Universal Basic Income. Find them here:-

[www.basicincome.org.uk/](http://www.basicincome.org.uk/)



The Citizen's Basic Income Trust is the website to go to if you just want more information. They have loads of background information for those who like to delve into the detail of an idea.

[www.citizensincome.org.uk](http://www.citizensincome.org.uk)

### On wanting to change the world.....

"How wonderful it is that no one has to wait, but can start right now to change the world! How wonderful it is that everyone, great and small, can immediately help bring about justice by giving of themselves!"

— Anne Frank








Bad times, hard times, this is what people keep saying; but let us live well, and times shall be good. We are the times: Such as we are, such are the times.

ST. AUGUSTINE, *Sermons*





Events

 <b>Mon 15<sup>th</sup> - Sun 20<sup>th</sup> June</b>	<p><b>Refugee Week 2020 is celebrated from 15 to 21 June</b> is going ahead but mostly with online zoom gatherings, quizzes, conferences, art shows and competitions. For details of the events planned across the UK go to <a href="https://refugeeweek.org.uk/events/">https://refugeeweek.org.uk/events/</a> and for those in Leeds in particular please go to <a href="https://migrationpartnership.org.uk/refugee-week-2020-full-programme/">https://migrationpartnership.org.uk/refugee-week-2020-full-programme/</a>.</p>
 <b>Sat 20<sup>th</sup> June</b>	<p><b>World Refugee Day</b> Seeking Sanctuary has arranged a commemorative event to remember all those event to remember all those who have died trying to reach the UK. 11.30am led by the Revd Dr Rose Hudson-Wilkin, Bishop of Dover <a href="http://www.KentPAhirestreaming.co.uk">www.KentPAhirestreaming.co.uk</a></p>
 <b>Wed 24<sup>th</sup> June</b>	<p><b>J&amp;P Leeds Gathering and AGM</b> Join us online for an evening gathering of all in the Leed Diocese (and guests from further afield are very welcome) who support the work of the J&amp;P Commission. The evening will provide an opportunity to hear a short talk from a Christine Allen, CAFOD Director A short review of the year of activity just gone and what lies ahead The opportunity to help shape the work of the Commission by joining one of 3 breakout groups covering our 3 newly-formed Issue Action Groups: Climate Crisis, Peace &amp; nonviolence and poverty in the UK Come and join us! <i>This event will be via Zoom and all registered attendees will be sent instructions and a link to join this event - but we will do this nearer the time.</i></p>
 <b>Tues 30<sup>th</sup> June</b>	<p><b>The Time Is Now – Virtual Lobby of MPs about Climate Change</b> The Climate Coalition – which is made up of over 100 organisations (including CAFOD) are inviting everyone to take part in a virtual lobby of their MP. You sign up on their website and then write to your MP saying you want to lobby them as part of this event. <a href="https://www.theclimatecoalition.org/virtual-lobby">https://www.theclimatecoalition.org/virtual-lobby</a></p>
 <b>Tues 7<sup>th</sup> July 7pm -8pm</b>	<p><b>Online: CAFOD Live – Living with Coronavirus in Syria and the surrounding countries</b> Join Hombeline Dulière and Sarah Burrows from the CAFOD Syria team to hear how Coronavirus is affecting communities in the region. This is an online event and you need to register to attend. <a href="https://cafod.org.uk/Give/Major-Giving/Philanthropy-events">https://cafod.org.uk/Give/Major-Giving/Philanthropy-events</a></p>

**Please forward this email E-News onto anyone else who you think might be interested. Even better, get them to send us their email address so we can add them to our contact database.**

**See our website for full details of these and other events that may be of interest**