



West Yorkshire Destitute Asylum Network (C.I.O.)
Registered Charity Number 1158052
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WYDAN SHELTER NEWSLETTER - Spring 2021

Dear Supporters,

It has been a busy 4 months since we wrote our last Newsletter in January, which shared exciting news of newly implemented hotel accommodation for WYDAN's destitute asylum seeker guests and the prospect of moving on to accommodate the guests in houses, with the help of a Public Health grant sourced via Leeds City Council. The Summer will be equally busy as we establish the houses and consider the possibility of providing some form of Winter Night Shelter in response to anticipated increased need.

Our Guests

In that time we have been able to support 13 different individuals (9 men and 4 women) of 8 different nationalities, 6 of whom have been enabled to move on. For much of January, February and March we were operating at our full capacity of 10 guests, currently we have 7 guests as we wait for our capacity to increase back to 10 when the house and flat noted below are up and running.

Our guests have been warm in their appreciation of the security and support we've been able to offer - one the guests shared this 'testimonial'

"I have had an unforgettable experience, I have met some trustworthy people who allowed me to smile again.

I remember a moment I had lost all hope because I was homeless. Sometimes I could not find food and I spent my nights from door to door just to have somewhere to sleep with a little protection. By the grace of God he guided me in the right path after I had been recommended by the Red Cross to WYDAN. I really appreciate WYDAN and all those associated for their hard work and their goodwill.

Now I am safe I have somewhere to sleep and I have money each week to buy food.

Thanks, God Bless "

At the Hotel

Until we secured our first house all our guests were accommodated in a family run hotel in the LS2 area, where each was provided with their own room, a weekly financial allowance to buy food and essentials and where appropriate, befriender support. We still have 3 guests living in the hotel, two of whom will move into a flat once it is available. We are fortunate to have found a place where the owners and staff are understanding of our guests' situation and have worked with us to provide the best support possible. One of the hotel's owners had this to say:

"It's been an absolute pleasure working with WYDAN. The team have shown nothing less than passion and commitment to the work that they do with Asylum Seekers by always putting them at the centre of everything they do. Over the past few months the project has run smoothly and really well, we strongly believe that this was able to happen because of fantastic leadership and direction. It has been a great opportunity for us to give something back and learn from such selfless passionate individuals."

The Houses

In March, after much searching and with the help of Leeds Housing Options, we secured our first house, a 4 bed end terrace in Beeston and were able to move 4 guests in on 22nd March. Those 4 men have settled in well with the ongoing support of Katrina and the team of befrienders – it's a well ordered, happy house. We were fortunate to have a large donation of good quality furniture, furnishings and household equipment, together with the volunteers to lift, shift and do everything necessary to make things ready.

A couple of our longstanding volunteers shared this:

Over the last few months we have been privileged to befriend two guests at the hotel and now at a house in Beeston. During this time we have seen a transformation in both their health and wellbeing as a result of having safe and secure accommodation, an allowance which gives them some independence and hopefully a personal contact with someone, albeit within the COVID restrictions. The guests frequently tell us how grateful they are to be in this situation and see it as a sign that people do actually care for them and see them as individuals and not numbers in a system. In the time we have known them we have noticed how much more settled and assured they have become and, despite their terrible plight, they are gaining in hope for a better future.

You may like this story from one of our befrienders:

"The asylum seeker my wife and I are befriending, said he would like to buy a cheap bicycle to save money on bus fares and allow him to explore beyond immediate area. We Christians sourced a bike from the Jewish boy next door who said he would give it to the Moslem youth for free!"

In the next few weeks, all being well, we will be completing tenancy agreements on a 2 bedroom flat (owned by the Methodist Church) and a second 4 bedroom house (owned by a couple of WYDAN supporters) both at significantly less than commercial rent. At that point we will be looking to extend our group of befrienders and seeking further support to provide food, etc.

Fund raising

The response to the note about funding in the January newsletter and the more direct appeal in Lent has been amazing. Our Treasurer responds:

"One of the rewards of being the WYDAN Treasurer is that I have been getting a lot of good news in recent weeks! Many thanks for all the donations. They really do make a difference. The response to our Lent appeal means that we are now pretty confident that we will have the finance to continue our current work in accommodating and supporting destitute asylum seekers for at least the next year - despite our current activities being much more expensive than the previous "night shelter" model."

Perhaps some folks might now be moved to fundraise in their own way during Refugee Week (14th-20th June) or maybe with a bit more time to plan, around World Homeless Day (10th October).

WYDAN will continue to try and build a secure funding base that has a sustainable balance of individual/group donations and grants to carry us forward into future years.

Thank you for your continuing support.

Donations are always welcome! By post to the WYDAN, c/o Andrew Rathbone, 256B Burley Road, Leeds LS4 2LA, cheques made payable to WYDAN.

Direct to the WYDAN's bank account no 20323123. Sort code 60-83-01.

Or online via the Charities Aid Foundation platform <https://cafdonate.cafonline.org/15943>

Gift Aid: Please let us know if we can claim gift aid on any donation (provide first line of address and postcode).