

hope projects



Annual Report for 2015/16



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Introduction

This report covers the year ended 31 March 2016.

The Hope Projects work to help destitute asylum-seekers and some others barred from recourse to public funds in the West Midlands. During the year 2015/16 there were four main Hope projects:

the Hope Destitution Fund, making cash grants to destitute asylum-seekers,

Hope Housing, providing emergency accommodation for homeless asylum-seekers,

the Hope Special Fund, making one-off grants for purposes not covered by the Hope Destitution Fund, and

Ujamaa / Women's Work (in partnership with the Rape and Sexual Violence Project), providing specialist counselling and advice/casework support for asylum-seeker and refugee women.

There were two sub-projects of Hope Housing:

the Hope Women's Group, and

the Hope Gardeners project (also known as **Kushinga Community Garden**).

Projects developed by Hope Projects with others included

the Advice Birmingham partnership, and

the Migrants' Union.

All these projects worked in close partnership with other local agencies.

Hope Destitution Fund

Asylum-seekers are barred from recourse to public funds, including all mainstream benefits and provision for the homeless. Fortnightly cash grants from the Hope Destitution Fund are generally made only to those who have a reasonable prospect of securing an alternative remedy to their destitution in the near future.

Referrers

The Hope Destitution Fund takes applications only from local referring agencies competent and experienced in working with destitute asylum-seekers, so that further information on applications, and longer-term remedies, can be sought from the agencies as necessary.

The criteria for grant-making are available at <http://www.hope-projects.org.uk/hdf/Hope-Destitution-Fund-criteria-September-2014.pdf>. The rates of payment during the year 2015/16 were normally £20 a week for adults and £15 a week for children.

During the year, referrals to the Fund (and to Hope Housing) were made by the following partner-organisations:

ASIRT (Asylum Support and Immigration Resource Team),
Austin Smith House,
BIRCH Community Hosting Network,
the British Red Cross,
the Children's Society Midlands Refugee Project,
Entraide (Mutual Aid),
Lifeline Options,
the Refugee and Migrant Centre of the Black Country, and
Restore (Birmingham Churches Together for Asylum-seekers and Refugees);

and also by the Hope Projects' own workers.

All of the above organisations were represented on the Hope Projects Steering Group, which also included co-opted individuals, and which guided the work of both the Destitution Fund and Hope Housing.

Fund-raising for the Destitution Fund

In the financial year 2015/16, **£62,913** was raised for the fund from grant-making trusts, individuals and faith groups. Trust-funders included:

the 29 May 1961 Trust,
the Cole Trust,
the Roughley Trust,
the Saintbury Trust,
the William A Cadbury Trust,

and a number of individual donors.

Grant-giving

The total of fortnightly grants made over the period 1 April 2015 to 31 March 2016 was **£79,856**. The average fortnightly amount was £2,957; an average of **70 people** was supported each fortnight. These clients were of 39 different nationalities.

Generally, a Hope Destitution Fund case is closed because a longer-term remedy for the client's destitution has been successfully secured.

Since the Fund was started in 2003, a total of **£1,034,892** has been disbursed.

Hope Housing

Hope Housing provides emergency accommodation for homeless and destitute asylum-seekers, barred from "recourse to public funds" and so from mainstream provision for the homeless, including nearly all hostels and night-shelters. All Hope Housing residents receive financial support from the Hope Destitution Fund.

Hope Housing residents can now generally only be accommodated for a maximum of six months – whether continuously or with breaks. However, if there is evidence that good progress is being made on the resident's asylum case, e.g. through the preparation of a further asylum application, an extension may be allowed.

During the year we accommodated 67 adults:

Females: 39

Males: 28

These included:

Couples: 6

Family with children: 1

Pregnant women: 6

Over the year our adult residents have been of 24 different nationalities.

Afghanistan: 5	Iran: 4
Albania: 1	Iraq: 3
Algeria: 3	Kenya: 1
Azerbaijan: 1	Malawi: 1
Cameroon: 2	Nigeria: 5
Cote D'Ivoire: 2	Pakistan: 3
DRC: 2	Palestine: 2
Egypt: 1	Rwanda: 1
Eritrea: 11	Somalia: 3
Ethiopia: 2	Sudan: 4
Ghana: 1	Uganda: 1
Guinea: 1	Zimbabwe: 7

As with the Hope Destitution Fund, accommodation is generally provided only to those with some prospect of securing a remedy to their homelessness in the near future.

The general development of Hope Housing was guided by the Hope Projects Steering Group; and a Panel meeting every six weeks guided housing-management matters. Applications from our referral-agencies were considered through email by a panel including Hope Projects workers and trustees and other co-opted members.

Over the year Hope Housing managed 9 properties. Eight of these were made available at peppercorn rents by housing associations and other social landlords:

Bournville Village Trust,
Catholic Archdiocese of Birmingham,
Friendship Care and Housing,
Mercian Housing Association,
Midland Heart, and
Yardley Great Trust.

The ninth property came to us through the generosity of a local family, up until November 2015.

As before, the salary costs of the project workers, together with the cost of electricity, gas and water, Council Tax, TV licences and other bills, the furnishing, repairs and maintenance of the properties and other management and running costs, were covered by funding from trusts and other bodies, including:

the 29 May 1961 Trust,
the Barrow Cadbury Trust,
the Eveson Trust,
the Roughley Trust,
the Saintbury Trust, and
the William A Cadbury Trust,

as well as from individual donors.

Our largest property, in Selly Oak, has a small office for Hope workers and volunteers, and is the base for a range of activities for residents from all the houses.

Coventry Peace House

There is no night-shelter in Birmingham that regularly accepts homeless asylum-seekers. We continued to rely on partner-organisation Coventry Peace House, with little funding but a huge commitment, to provide basic emergency overnight shelter in cases where we could not help street-homeless people immediately.

A had an asylum claim refused, and her solicitor wanted to charge her money to apply for Judicial Review of the decision. She was living in Home Office “Section 4” accommodation, and could not afford to pay the solicitor. She had received an eviction letter and was due to “sign” at the Home Office Reporting Centre; she was panicking about being homeless and extremely distressed about the possibility of being detained. The Hope Projects Women’s Worker referred her case to another firm of solicitors, who initiated a Judicial Review, and on the basis of this she submitted an appeal against termination of her support and accommodation. However, the fresh claim she had submitted was weak, permission was not granted for the Judicial Review to proceed, and she lost her accommodation.

A was then accommodated by Hope Housing. New asylum representations were prepared, with expert reports supporting her claim. She was granted refugee status.

B had been detained in the Home Office’s Yarls Wood Removal Centre. After release she was living within the community, but without any financial support. She had a fresh asylum claim pending, so a Hope Projects worker assisted her in applying for Home Office “Section 4” support and accommodation. She disclosed past abuse and sexual violence and was referred to Hope Project’s partner-organisation the Rape and Sexual Violence Project (RSVP) for counselling. Her Home Office support was restored, and she is now awaiting a decision on her asylum claim.

C’s asylum claim had been refused. She had severe health problems and spoke no English; she was very confused. The Hope Projects Women’s Worker worked with her GP, the hospital and the Home Office to secure emergency support-tokens, reduced “signing” with the Home Office, and health-care access. Refugee Action’s CARE project worked in partnership to offer interpretation and assistance. Shortly before her court appeal, her solicitor abandoned her case. The Hope Projects worker supported her in asking the court for an adjournment to enable her to find legal advice and assistance for her hearing. After finding a legal representative, she was granted refugee status. She was then provided by the Hope Projects worker with assistance to apply for benefits and housing.

D had been assisted by Hope Projects partner-organisation ASIRT in submitting an application for leave to remain in the UK. She had been receiving financial support and accommodation from the Home Office, but this was terminated on the basis that she had received money from her son’s father (for the son, at Christmas). She moved in with the father, but suffered domestic violence. Social Services intervened and the Hope Projects worker advocated strongly for support, which was eventually put in place. **D** was recently granted 30 months’ leave to remain, and is looking for a job.

E together with his wife and child were referred to Hope Housing as destitute and homeless. While partner-organisation ASIRT was dealing with their immigration case, Hope Housing provided accommodation and financial support which secured the stability needed to pursue a remedy to their immigration issues. The family were eventually granted refugee status. **E** told us: "My family and I will never forget what you have done for us. It was winter and freezing, we knocked on many doors but nobody wanted to help us with a place to stay. We could not listen to any advice because we were cold, homeless and hungry and also worried about our child. That house you gave us allowed us to have stability. You may have no idea about the difference it made... Without your help, we would not have the patience and the right set of mind to listen to advice."

F, disabled and with other health problems, was signposted to Hope Projects when she lost her Home Office accommodation. Our Women's Worker referred her to Hope Housing and a local firm of solicitors. The woman was in great need of emotional support and empowerment, which the worker provided through one-to-one sessions, therapeutic group activities, referral to partner-organisations for counselling, medical reports, training and campaigning. Eventually the solicitors secured refugee status for her.

G, in his 40s, was referred to Hope Projects by partner Lifeline Options. His further asylum submissions were refused and "Section 4" support terminated. Hope Projects provided accommodation and financial support which enabled **G** to focus on collecting the evidence required for new submissions. After a few months, following new submissions he applied for "Section" 4 support again, and was accommodated by the Home Office.

Hope Special Fund

Over the year **£908** was disbursed from the Hope Special Fund (mostly for travel costs, e.g. travel to the Home Office, medical appointments etc.). Most of the funding for the Hope Special Fund came from Hope Projects supporters in Lichfield.

Hope Women's Group

During the year the **Women's Group** developed into the **Women with Hope** group, meeting weekly, which, as well as providing emotional and practical support to Hope Housing residents and others, learnt about and campaigned around asylum issues. A strong relationship was built with the national organisation Women for Refugee Women, around joint work lobbying for change to stop the detention of women.

Hope gardening project

Hope Gardeners (Kushinga Community Garden) continued to meet regularly on Saturdays for planting and garden upkeep; and the project ran a programme of barbecues and skill-shares on the last Saturday of every month from April to September 2015, funded by the Bournville Village Trust, and then a series of work and skill-share days at the garden one Tuesday of every month.

While Kushinga is now financially independent of Hope Projects, we continue to wish it well.

Ujamaa Project

Ujamaa worked in partnership with the Rape and Sexual Violence Project (RSVP) to provide specialist counselling and advice/casework support for asylum-seeker and refugee women, with funding from Comic Relief.

During the year the Hope Projects Women's Worker was able to support and assist **64 women**. In **41** of these cases she worked with local law firms and agencies to ensure better legal representation for the women. Women were also referred to BIRCH (Birmingham Community Hosting), Freedom from Torture, Restore, the Helen Bamber Foundation, Medical Justice, LGBT groups, St Chads Sanctuary, the Food Bank and other projects, and could attend weekly drop-in sessions for confidential advice and assistance. The project worker also ran regular training days around refugee and asylum-seeker issues for women supported by the project at the drop-in group, and invited other organisations to run sessions including ASIRT, the Children's Society and the Terrence Higgins Trust.

RSVP provided professional counselling, and specialist training workers and volunteers from other organisations. Hope Projects and RSVP worked together to produce expert reports when requested by legal advisors to submit to the Home Office around women's experiences of rape and sexual violence.

Migrant Families Support Project

This project was operated up until the end of December 2015 (when funding ceased) by the Hope Projects in partnership with ASIRT and Birmingham Community Law Centre, funded by the Baring Foundation, Comic Relief and Unbound Philanthropy. The Hope Projects Women's Worker provided support to migrant women and children with "no recourse to public funds", including on-site advocacy for such families during the Local-Authority support process.

During the year the Hope Projects worker was able to support **16 women with children**. 9 of these had been refused asylum; 3 were overstayers, 1 woman had entered the UK as a wife of a man settled here and then suffered domestic violence; 1 had been granted "discretionary leave to remain without recourse to public funds"; and 2 families were waiting for a decision on their asylum case.

The work included:

- support with access to legal advice;
- assistance with Social Services access;
- emotional support, referrals to health services and additional support projects including the Rape and Sexual Violence Project;
- working with Children's Centre staff around domestic violence, and integrating needs of children and single mothers.

The Migrants' Union

The Migrants' Union continued to meet fortnightly at Birmingham Asian Resource Centre, for migrants to come together and discuss their asylum/immigration cases, and the Union received some funding from the Barrow Cadbury Trust. Another branch of the union meets at Coventry Peace House

With a membership including asylum-seekers and other new migrants seeking to regularise their immigration status, together with others who have succeeded in this, the Union gave practical mutual support to members submitting asylum and human-rights claims.

Asylum/immigration casework

During the year Hope Projects workers attended immigration drop-in advice sessions at Birmingham Asian Resource Centre together with Salman Mirza, Mohammed Shazad and others.

An application to the Lloyds Bank Foundation for funding of an asylum/immigration caseworker was successful, and Aliya Khan (formerly of TRP Solicitors) took up the post in February 2016. We have applied for registration with the Office of the Immigration Service Commissioner (OISC).

Advice Birmingham partnership

The Advice Birmingham Web site at <http://www.advice-birmingham.net>, developed and funded by Hope Projects, was maintained, but the partnership was otherwise not active during the year.

Hope Projects people during 2015/16

Trustees

Shari Brown, chair
Derek Bennett, treasurer
Chris Chaora (till March 2016)
Dr Surinder Guru
Rev. Dr Neil Johnson
Adrian Randall
Rt Hon. Clare Short
Ranjit Sondhi CBE

Workers

Geoff Wilkins / Phil Davis, Project Co-ordinator (Phil Davis from March 2016)
Almamy Taal, Housing Worker
Astrid Filippi, Women's Worker (till February 2016)
Sarah Taal, Housing and Women's Support Worker (till August 2015)
Aliya Khan, Casework Project Worker (from February 2016)

Volunteers

Agnes Tanoh – housing, women's group, garden, cooking & interpreting support
Ali Tezik – gardening, house maintenance and painting
Bridget Obi – housing and women's group
Charles Mjawe – garden project leader
Dot Squier – gardening
Felipe Molina – gardening
Ger Sampson – women's group
Hamida Mohamed – cooking
Harriet Thuambe – women's group
Immaculate Nabakooza – cooking, women's group and gardening
Khatam Mitalov – housing
Marie Mezartio – cooking
Rania Youssef – interpreting
Rose Basada – women's group
Rosemary Crawley (Lichfield) women's group
Sue Fallon – Hope Housing panel volunteer
Talhatou Diallo – women's group
Zenzile Chabuka – gardening and women's group

During the year the projects also depended heavily upon the commitment and support of workers at our partner-organisations, and individual supporters.

Our thanks also go again to Birmingham Asian Resource Centre for providing office space and facilities to the Hope Projects workers.



Hope Web sites

We are now offering a professional Web-site development service. We can design, build and maintain fully responsive sites with or without content-management systems, at competitive rates. All proceeds go towards the work of Hope Projects.

(For examples, see our own site at www.hope-projects.org.uk, or the Birmingham Black Oral History Project site at www.bbohp.org.uk.)

Contact websites@hope-projects.org.uk for more information.

Hope Projects (West Midlands) Ltd is a company limited by guarantee no. 07341898 and registered charity no. 1138402.

The registered office of the company is at **110 Hamstead Road, Handsworth, Birmingham B20 2QS.**

You can contact Hope Projects at admin@hope-projects.org.uk or through our Web site at <http://www.hope-projects.org.uk/>.