

hope
projects
report
10|11

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This report covers the year ended 31 March 2011. During that year we changed from being a part of Birmingham Law Centre to an independent charitable company, Hope Projects (West Midlands) Ltd. The report covers our work both before and after that change.

Introduction

The Hope projects work to help destitute asylum-seekers and others barred from public funds in the West Midlands. The first project – then known as the Asylum-Seekers’ Destitution Fund and now as the Hope Destitution Fund – was founded in 2003. There are now four main Hope projects:

- the Hope Destitution Fund
- Hope Housing
- the Hope Fund for Children
- Hope Counselling.

All these projects are operated in close partnership with other local agencies.

The Hope Destitution Fund

The Hope Destitution Fund (HDF) makes fortnightly cash grants to destitute asylum-seekers and some other new migrants in the West Midlands who by virtue of their immigration status are barred from “recourse to public funds” - which includes all statutory welfare benefits and all statutorily-funded provision for the homeless.

Fortnightly grants to HDF clients are agreed by a Grants Panel made up of representatives from:

- ASIRT (Asylum Support and Immigration Resource Team)
- Birmingham Law Centre
- British Red Cross (West Midlands)
- Children’s Society Midlands Refugee Project
- Lifeline Options
- Refugee Council
- Refugee and Migrant Centre of the Black Country
- Restore.

All of these organisations are also represented on the Hope Projects Steering Group, which also includes co-opted individuals, and which meets regularly to guide the work of both the Hope Destitution Fund and Hope Housing.

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

The criteria for grant making are available at http://www.hope-projects.org.uk/hdf/Hope_Destitution_Fund_criteria_September_2010.pdf.

Fund-raising

In the financial year 2010/11 £79,217 was raised for disbursement in grants to destitute individuals and families, from grant-making trusts, individuals and faith groups; £35,214 of this was received (at least initially) by Birmingham Law Centre, and £44,003 went directly to the Hope Projects. Funders included

- the Bryant Trust
- the William A Cadbury Trust
- the Roughley Trust
- the Tudor Trust.

In addition, funding of Hope Projects’ work from the Heart of Birmingham PCT included £41,000 to provide financial support from the Fund to new-migrant pregnant women and new mothers barred from public funds.

And our partner-organisation the Children’s Society Midlands Refugee Project gave a total of £20,000 for the year 2010/11 towards grants for families with children barred from public funds; these grants were made both from the Hope Destitution Fund and from the Hope Fund for Children (for which see further below).

The PCT funding also contained a small element specifically for administration of the Fund; apart from that, none of the money raised for grant-

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making was used for administrative costs. Before Hope independence these costs were covered by Birmingham Law Centre from its general funds; since independence we have relied upon a team of committed volunteers.

Grant-giving

In the financial year 2010/11 £94,432 was disbursed.

During the year, 649 Hope Destitution Fund cases were closed. Of these, 361 were of single men, 132 were single women, 90 were women with children and 66 were in couples. There were 98 children included in the cases.

Clients came from a total of 42 countries:

Zimbabwe	83
Iran	74
Congo	56
Somalia	37
Eritrea	34
Sudan	33
Iraq	29
Jamaica	27
Pakistan	16
Guinea	16
Gambia	13
Sierra Leone	12

and others from Afghanistan, Albania, Algeria, Angola, Bolivia, Burundi, Cameroon, Ethiopia, Ghana, India, Ivory Coast, Kenya, Kosovo, Liberia, Libya, Lithuania, Mauritania, Nigeria, Norway, Palestine, Poland, Rumania, Rwanda, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Syria, Tanzania, Uganda, and Yemen.

Grants to families with children

As always, many of the Fund's most vulnerable destitute and homeless clients were pregnant women and lone mothers or couples with children.

Between 1 August 2008 (when our PCT funding started) and 31 March 2011 a total of £94,170 was disbursed from the Fund to 214 pregnant women and new mothers (mothers with at least one child aged under 2 years). Of these, 71 were pregnant, and 146 had children aged under 2

years. Only 56 had partners (also destitute). 23 mothers with children under 2 (or pregnant) receiving grants were also accommodated by Hope Housing. A further £42,414 was disbursed to 103 families with children all aged 2 years or more. Only 35 of such families included a male partner (also destitute). Seven of the families were also accommodated by Hope Housing.

Once fortnightly grant-making to an HDF client begins, it generally continues until there is a "remedy" for the client's destitution. The average period of time for which families with children were supported was 10 weeks, though periods ranged from just 2 weeks to more than 50 weeks.

The average total disbursement to a family with children was £431.

Giving to the Fund

Online donations to the Fund can be made through the Hope Projects Web site, at <http://www.hope-projects.org.uk/node/17>, and standing-order forms can be downloaded at http://www.hope-projects.org.uk/hdf/HDF_standing_order_form.doc.

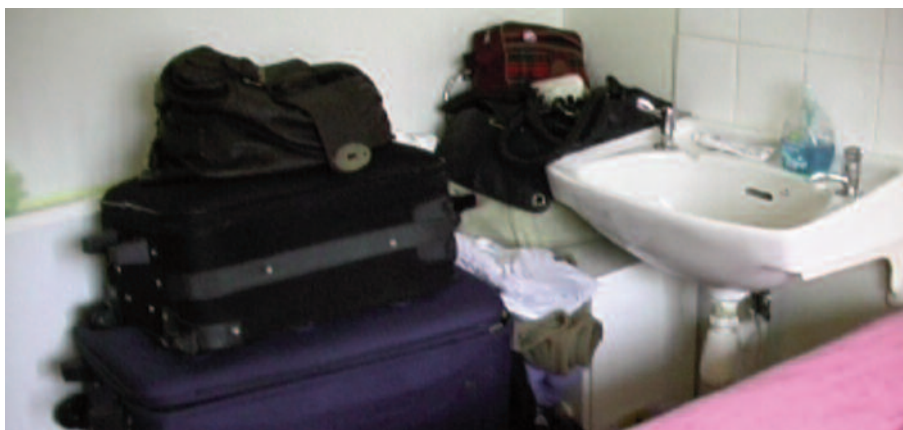
Hope Housing

Hope Housing provides emergency accommodation for homeless and destitute asylum-seekers and some others barred from recourse to public funds.

The general development of Hope Housing is guided by the Hope Projects Steering Group; and a Referrals and Residents Sub-Committee guides housing-management matters.

Over the year 2010/11 Hope Housing managed six properties made available at peppercorn rents by housing associations and other social landlords: these were

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



In addition, two privately rented properties were funded by a grant from the Heart of Birmingham Teaching Primary Care Trust as accommodation for new-migrant pregnant women and new mothers barred from public funds.

The accommodation is provided at no cost to the residents, and all residents in Hope Housing accommodation are supported by fortnightly grants from the Hope Destitution Fund. The cost of electricity, gas and water, Council Tax, TV licence and other bills, and also the furnishing, repairs and maintenance of the properties and other management and running costs, was covered by funding raised from grant-making trusts, including:

- the Bewley Charitable Trust
- the Cole Charitable Trust
- the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation
- the Eveson Charitable Trust
- Friends Hall Farm Street Trust
- the Leigh Trust
- the SC & ME Morlands Charitable Trust
- the Saintbury Trust
- the Garfield Weston Foundation.

In the year 2010/11 we accommodated 36 single men, 33 single women, 22 women who were pregnant or new mothers, and 6 other families with children, giving a total of 97 adults, plus 21 children. Clients stayed for periods of time ranging from a few days to many months.

Our residents were of a wide range of nationalities, including Afghan, Chinese, Democratic Republic of Congo, Eritrean, Gambian, Guinean, Iranian, Iraqi, Jamaican, Kenyan, Nigerian, Rwandan, Somali, South African, Ugandan, Vietnamese and Zimbabwean.

We continued to use one of our larger properties, in Selly Oak, as first-stage accommodation where residents' needs could if necessary be assessed before they moved on to other properties. This house also has a small office for Hope workers and volunteers, and is the base for a range of activities for residents from all the houses. A local storage firm, 1st Self Access Storage, has generously continued to provide us with free storage space which is

used for storing furniture and other goods donated to the project by supporters.

New properties

Funding from the Heart of Birmingham PCT for the two houses which were rented from private landlords ceased at the end of March 2011. Fortunately Midland Heart offered us two new properties to which we have been able to transfer residents from these properties.

Another housing association has offered us a block of one-bedroomed flats, and with the assistance of the housing association we are currently developing plans for the funding and management of this accommodation.

Hope Knitting Group

This group is made up of Hope Housing residents, Hope volunteers, and friends, meeting every Monday in one of the Hope houses.

The group teaches the basics to women new to knitting, and provides them and more experienced knitters with the tools and goods to use their skills; it also provides emotional and practical support to women housed in Hope accommodation, and builds bridges of friendship, helping them to tackle isolation and develop a sense of community.

The Heart of Birmingham PCT have commissioned the group to knit 100 "breasts", for midwives to use when introducing new mothers to breastfeeding. They have also paid an artist to run workshops with the group.

Hope Gardening Project

The Hope Gardening Project is a partnership between Hope Projects residents and supporters, members of the local community in south-west Birmingham including the Gung Ho housing co-operative, the South Birmingham Food Co-operative, and Bourneville Village Trust, who have provided a plot of land close to one of the Hope Housing properties.

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The accommodation is provided at no cost to the residents, and all residents in Hope Housing accommodation are supported by fortnightly grants from the Hope Destitution Fund”

The project aims to give Hope residents, other asylum-seekers and refugees and the local community a garden to work on together – to be creative, promote interpersonal relationships, keep minds and bodies active, and provide nutritious food .

Hope Fund for Children

The Hope Fund for Children, which is funded by the Children’s Society Midlands Refugee Project, makes one-off grants to mothers and children barred from recourse to public funds in and around Birmingham. Applications for grants are made to and determined by the Children’s Society, while disbursement of the grants is administered by the Hope Projects.

Applications to this Fund come not just from Hope referral-agencies but also from other statutory and non-statutory agencies working with new-migrant mothers and children, including children’s centres, women’s projects, health visitors and other health workers.

In the year 2010/11 the Fund disbursed £10,125 to 81 clients, with a total of 135 children. Grants were generally of £125. 36 of the clients were asylum-seekers, and 45 were others barred from recourse to public funds by virtue of their immigration status.

Hope Counselling

This project has provided free professional counselling for traumatised asylum-seekers and refugees. The counselling was provided by Hope partner-organisation the Rape and Sexual Violence Project (RSVP), who offered one-to-one counselling sessions on a weekly basis to individuals.

Counselling costs were covered by a grant from the Heart of Birmingham Teaching Primary Care Trust, and RSVP were able to cover most of the ancillary costs, including management, initial assessments and interpreting services, from other funding

After an initial assessment at RSVP offices clients then benefited from up to 24 counselling sessions

based at the Birmingham offices of the Medical Foundation for the Care of Victims of Torture or RSVP. Between January and December 2010 the project supported 52 clients – 24 men and 28 women.

Numbers by age were:

18 – 20	4
21 - 29	22
30 – 39	14
40 – 49	9
50 – 59	1
Not known	2

The main issues presented were:

Rape	14
Trafficking / forced prostitution	4
Sexual torture	20
Depression / anxiety	5
Child sexual abuse	1
Domestic violence	2
Sexual assault	6

(Some clients of course presented more than one issue.)

Hope Counselling’s work has been guided by a Steering Group made up of representatives from

- Hope Projects
- ASIRT (Asylum Support and Immigration Resource Team)
- the Medical Foundation for the Care of Victims of Torture
- the Rape and Sexual Violence Project.

We are now seeking further funding to continue the work of the project.

People-trafficking

During the year we began to meet with others with a view to providing accommodation and support for trafficked people in Birmingham.

Potential partner organisations include:

- ASIRT
- Red Cross
- Regional Anti-Trafficking Network
- Restore
- NSPCC.



Casework

Hope Project workers and volunteers continued to undertake casework, working under the supervision of Birmingham Law Centre's Senior Solicitor and other casework supervisors.

As before, the work included making applications to UKBA Asylum Support (formerly NASS) for support and accommodation for destitute asylum-seekers, as well as some asylum/immigration work, mostly assisting families and individuals in obtaining Indefinite Leave to Remain (ILR) under the Home Office's current Casework Resolution exercise (also known as the "legacy scheme"), which covers people who first claimed asylum before 5 March 2007.

Also during the year, Birmingham Law Centre's Development Manager and Caseworker Michael Bates and volunteers Nigel Simons and Tina Ford worked successfully to build the Law Centre's work with asylum-seekers and refugees by developing a system of case-referral from Hope partner-organisations.

Hope Projects trustees/directors

- Shari Brown, chair
- Derek Bennett, treasurer
- Dr Surinder Guru
- Rev. Neill Johnson
- Adrian Randall
- Rt Hon. Clare Short

Workers and volunteers

Funding for the Hope Projects' two paid workers during 2010/11 came primarily from the LankellyChase Foundation, the Lloyds TSB Foundation, and the Heart of Birmingham Teaching Primary Care Trust.

Workers:

- Sarah Malka, Hope Housing Support Worker
- Geoff Wilkins, Project Co-ordinator

Volunteers:

- Amir Abdullahi
- Charles Beton
- Sue Fallon
- Isatou Jobe
- Linda McLeod
- Farisai Muzenda
- Nigel Simons
- Almamy Taal
- Judy Tweddle
- Naoko Uehara
- Edwin Zuma

During the year the projects also depended heavily upon the commitment and support of Hope Projects Steering Group members, workers at our partner-organisations, and Birmingham Law Centre's admin staff – particularly Balbir Klair, Linda Murphy and Susanne Chapman. The Hope Projects Steering Group is chaired by Shari Brown.

You can learn more about the Hope Projects, and download copies of reports and other documents, from the Web site at <http://www.hope-projects.org.uk/>.

Seven case studies

These case-studies illustrate how closely the Hope Projects work with our partner-organisations.

G, a Zimbabwean, was refused asylum in the UK which left him homeless and destitute. Having exhausted the hospitality of friends, he was forced to stay at Coventry Peace House, a very basic night-shelter, whilst his solicitor was working on his fresh asylum claim. Hope partner-organisation ASIRT referred G to the Hope Projects, and he was accommodated in a Hope Housing property and supported by the Destitution Fund while ASIRT applied for "Section-4" support from the UK Border Agency on the basis of a fresh asylum claim.

Unfortunately, the fresh claim was refused and so G's Section-4 support was also refused. Support and accommodation from the Hope

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Projects continued until ASIRT was able to draft a new fresh claim for G, and as a result he was granted refugee status.

M, from Sierra Leone, was referred to Hope Projects because she was pregnant and completely destitute; she was accommodated by Hope Housing and supported by the Fund. ASIRT were then able to apply for Section-4 support once M was in the late stages of pregnancy, on the basis that she was “not fit to travel”. M was moved into Section-4 accommodation; but the shared accommodation she was given was dirty and too small to accommodate herself and the new baby. ASIRT were able to advocate on M's behalf to ensure that M was moved to more suitable accommodation once the baby was born.

N and her two children are from the Democratic Republic of Congo. N had been forced to marry a high-ranking army officer in the DRC before coming to the UK, where she stayed with her uncle. However, the uncle died, and N and her children, barred from any benefits or other “recourse to public funds”, became completely destitute. The British Red Cross referred the family to the Hope Destitution Fund and Hope Housing last year and they are still being supported and accommodated by the projects.

F, her husband and their four children relied on Section-4 support and accommodation. They went to Tesco for their usual weekly shopping with the pre-paid charge card they had from the UK Border Agency, but discovered at the check-out that their card had not been credited with funds. They were then told by their accommodation-provider that their support had been terminated, and that they should leave their accommodation.

Since then the Hope Destitution Fund has been supporting the family while a Birmingham Law Centre caseworker pursues a remedy for their situation.

S was a Somali woman with a two-month-old baby. She had applied for Section-4 support a month before she gave birth, the application being based on the fact that her case was being considered under the “legacy” scheme by the UK Border Agency. The UKBA sought further information on her application, which she was unable to provide because she was very ill for a month after her baby's birth.

She was staying in the living-room of a friend, without heating, and her health and the baby's were suffering. She and her child were accommodated by Hope Housing while a new application for Section-4 support was submitted. A month after first receiving help from the Hope Projects she was granted Indefinite Leave to Remain in the UK.

J, an Ivorian woman with a six-month-old baby, was awaiting a decision on her further asylum representations from the UKBA. She was living with a man who had offered her a room to live in, but then abused her sexually. ASIRT referred her to the Hope Destitution Fund and Hope Housing, helped her to submit an application for Section-4 support, and liaised with her solicitor regarding her asylum case. She was refused Section-4 support but granted Indefinite Leave to Remain within two weeks.

C, from Jamaica, is a refused asylum-seeker with a young daughter who has a serious and rare medical condition. C and her daughter had previously been staying with a friend, but found themselves homeless and destitute when their host moved abroad. The Hope Projects provided the family with accommodation and financial support whilst legal representations were made on their behalf and support from the UK Border Agency was applied for. Whilst C and her daughter were approved for UKBA support relatively quickly, they had to wait for almost three months to be accommodated. The Hope Projects continued to offer support and accommodation during this time.

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 Dolphin House, 54 Coventry Road, Birmingham B10 0RX.

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



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