

hope  
projects  
report  
11/12

# hope projects



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**This report covers the year ended 31 March 2012. This was the Hope Projects' first full year of operation as an independent charitable company, Hope Projects (West Midlands) Ltd.**

## Introduction

The Hope Projects work to help destitute asylum seekers and others barred from public funds in the West Midlands. The first project, the Destitution Fund, was founded in 2003. There are now four main Hope projects:

- the Hope Destitution Fund,
- Hope Housing,
- the Hope Fund for Children, and
- the Hope Special Fund;

and two sub-projects of Hope Housing:

- the Hope Knitting Group, and
- the Hope Gardeners project.

The Hope Counselling project did not operate during the year because of a lack of funding.

All projects work in close partnership with other local agencies.

## Hope Destitution Fund

The Hope Destitution Fund makes fortnightly cash grants to destitute asylum seekers, who are barred from "recourse to public funds" - which includes all statutory welfare benefits and statutorily funded provision for the homeless.

Grants are agreed by a Grants Panel currently made up of representatives from

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

together with workers and volunteers from the Hope Projects. 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 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 as necessary.

The criteria for grant making are available at [http://www.hope-projects.org.uk/hdf/Hope\\_Destitution\\_Fund\\_criteria.pdf](http://www.hope-projects.org.uk/hdf/Hope_Destitution_Fund_criteria.pdf).

## Fund-raising

In the financial year 2011/12, £59,544 was raised for disbursement in grants to destitute individuals and families, from grant-making trusts, individuals and faith groups. Funders included:

“The Hope Destitution Fund makes fortnightly cash grants to destitute asylum seekers, who are barred from recourse to public funds,,

- the Bournville Village Trust,
- the Bryant Trust,
- the Grimmitt Trust, and
- the Roughley Trust.

There were 95 female single adults, 158 male single adults, and 12 couples. Cases included a total of 33 children. There were 11 pregnant women.

And our partner-organisation the Children's Society Midlands Refugee Project gave £8,000 towards grants for families with children barred from public funds; these grants were made from both the Destitution Fund and the Hope Fund for Children (for which see further below).

Both the total amount disbursed and the number of clients helped were lower than in 2010/11. The drop in the number of clients was mainly because of the cessation of PCT funding. However, the amount disbursed was only £9,525 less than in 2010/11. Although less people were helped, they received support for longer periods of time; this was mainly because of harsher policies adopted by the UK Border Agency in considering fresh asylum applications.

However, we received no further funding from the Heart of Birmingham Primary Care Trust (previously the Fund's only statutory benefactor), which like other PCTs was in a state of transition during the year pending the re-organisation of primary health care in the UK. The PCT funding had been for grants to pregnant women and new mothers barred from recourse to public funds, including non-asylum-seekers. We are now actively pursuing the possibility of further NHS support for the Fund.

Clients came from 41 countries:

As usual, none of the money raised for grant-making has been used for administrative costs; these continue to be covered from our general funds, with the help of some very committed volunteers.

Afghanistan	10	Morocco	1
Algeria	8	Namibia	1
Burundi	3	Niger	1
Cameroon	2	Nigeria	12
China	3	N Korean	1
DRC	15	Pakistan	3
Egypt	1	Palestine	1
Eritrea	21	Rwanda	1
Ethiopia	2	Senegal	3
Gambia	6	Sierra Leone	1
Ghana	2	Somali	22
Guinea	3	South Africa	2
India	3	Sri Lanka	3
Iran	15	Sudan	11
Iraq	15	Syria	1
Ivory Coast	5	Togo	2
Jamaica	13	Uganda	1
Kenya	6	Yemen	2
Liberia	4	Zimbabwe	46
Libya	1	stateless	1
Malawi	2	not known	8
Mali	1		

## Grant-giving

In the financial year 2011/12 £84,907 was disbursed from the Fund. We assisted 265 individuals and families during the year, giving an average total grant per case of £320.

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## Giving to the Fund

Online donations to the Destitution Fund can be made through our Web site, at [www.hope-projects.org.uk](http://www.hope-projects.org.uk), and standing-order forms can be downloaded from the site

## Hope Housing

Hope Housing provides emergency accommodation for homeless and destitute asylum seekers, who are barred from mainstream provision for the homeless.

The general development of Hope Housing is guided by the Hope Projects Steering Group; and a Referrals and Residents Panel meeting every six weeks guides housing-management matters.

Applications from our referral-agencies are considered each week by a panel including Hope workers and trustees and other co-opted members.

Over the year 2011/12 Hope Housing managed eight 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, and
- Yardley Great Trust.

Hope Housing accommodation is provided at no cost to the residents, and all residents are supported by fortnightly grants from the Hope Destitution Fund. The salary costs of the Hope Housing Support Worker, together with 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, were covered by funding raised from trusts, including:

- the Bewley Charitable Trust,
- the Bryant Trust,
- the Cole Charitable Trust,
- the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation,
- the Eveson Charitable Trust,
- the Friends Hall Farm Street Trust
- the Leigh Trust,
- the Roughley Trust,
- the S C and M E Morlands Charitable Trust,
- the Saintbury Trust,
- the C B and H H Taylor 1984 Trust, and
- the Garfield Weston Foundation.

The Hope Co-ordinator's post was funded by the LankellyChase Foundation.

In 2011/12 we accommodated 22 single men, 36 single women, 7 pregnant women, 3 women with children, 3 couples with children, and 1 childless couple, giving totals of 76 adults and 7 children.

These numbers were generally lower than those for 2010/11 because clients were accommodated for longer periods of time, again because of the harsher UKBA regime. A drop in the number of children housed was of course due also

“Over the year 2011/12 Hope Housing managed eight properties made available at peppercorn rents by housing associations and other social landlords,,

to the cessation of PCT funding, which covered accommodation for non-asylum-seekers with children.

Our adult residents were of 22 different nationalities, as follows:

Afghanistan	2	Kuwait	1
Algeria	2	Liberia	1
Angola	1	Namibia	1
China	2	Nigeria	1
DRC	4	North Korea	1
Eritrea	7	Palestine	1
Ethiopia	1	Sierra Leone	1
Iran	6	Somalia	6
Iraq	5	South Africa	1
Jamaica	3	Uganda	1
Kenya	3	Zimbabwe	25

The following medical conditions (not including pregnancy or recent birth) were recorded for residents:

- Victim of torture; kidney operation
- Old age, mobility issues
- Recently discharged from hospital - collapsed in street
- Depression, anxiety, sleeping difficulties (three cases)
- High blood pressure (three cases)
- Asthma, high blood pressure
- High blood pressure, palpitations, anxiety, sleeping problems
- Post-traumatic stress disorder from domestic violence
- Depression, possible multiple personalities
- Insulin-dependent diabetic, kidney problem

- Post-traumatic stress disorder
- Heart problems, hearing difficulties
- Heart problem
- Stomach problems, cannot walk long distances or carry heavy objects
- HIV-positive, respiratory infection
- Limited mobility, victim of domestic violence
- Arthritis of knees, asthma, tinnitus
- Anaemic
- We continued to use one of our larger properties 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, generously continued to provide us with free furniture storage space

Possible new properties

- Our plans for a block of flats in Sparkbrook, generously offered to us by the housing association Friendship Care and Housing, fell through because of misinformed opposition from the local Neighbourhood Forum.
- However, we are currently discussing a similar venture with another housing association, involving a property with sixteen bedsitters and single rooms with shared facilities. Management and running costs for the property would be financed on a "mixed-use" basis, with



residents who have recently obtained leave to remain (and so can work, and claim Housing Benefit) paying rent to subsidise the asylum seeker residents who are “barred from recourse to public funds”.

## Hope Knitting Group and Hope Gardeners project

These groups, made up of Hope Housing residents, other Hope clients, volunteers and friends, continued to thrive, and to provide therapeutic recreation and companionship for our clients, as well as raising money for the projects.

The Knitting Group meets 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 Knitting Group has recently received a generous grant from the Hilden Charitable Fund which will enable the project to develop and to expand into other areas of craftwork.

Hope Gardeners 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 Bournville Village Trust, who have provided a plot of land close to one of the Hope Housing properties.

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 (including non-asylum-seekers). During 2011/12 applications for grants were made to and determined by the Children’s Society, while disbursement of the grants was 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.

In the year 2011/12 the Fund disbursed £4,375 in £125 grants to 35 clients, with a total of 65 children. 17 of the clients were asylum seekers, and 18 were others barred from recourse to public funds by virtue of their immigration status.

Eleven clients were referred to the Fund by the Children’s Society, three each by ASIRT and the Hope Projects, and

“These groups provide therapeutic recreation and companionship for our clients, as well as raising money for the projects,,

the rest by a range of other projects working with new-migrant mothers and children, including children's centres, women's projects, health visitors and other health workers.

## Lichfield support group and Hope Special Fund

During the year an enthusiastic group of Hope Projects supporters in Lichfield undertook to raise money for a new Hope fund, which now provides grants to asylum seekers for purposes not covered by the Hope Destitution Fund or the Hope Fund for Children, e.g. fares for essential travel, the cost of expert reports to support asylum applications, and other one-off needs.

Personal links between asylum seekers in Birmingham and Lichfield residents are being forged through the knitting and gardening groups.

## People-trafficking

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

## Casework

Hope Project workers continued to undertake some casework, working under the supervision of Birmingham Law Centre's Senior Solicitor. This mainly involved making applications for UKBA or local-authority support for Hope Projects clients, and particularly Hope Housing residents.

## Hope Projects trustees

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

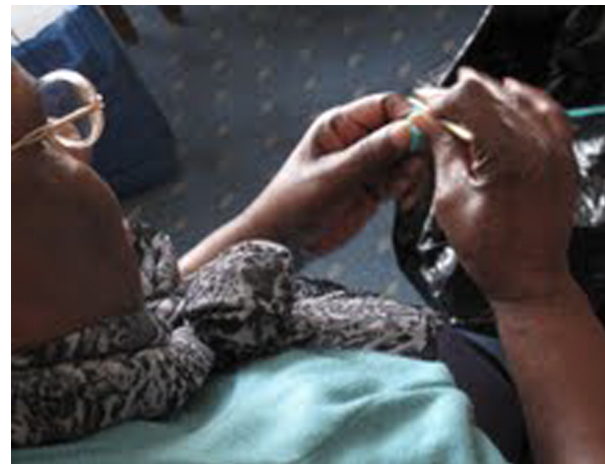
## Hope Projects workers and volunteers during 2011/12

### Workers:

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

### Volunteers:

- Kaveh Alqassi
- Rose Basada
- Nicky Clarke
- Titus Dongo
- Sue Fallon
- Linda McLeod
- Muna Edris Mohamed
- Felipe Molina
- Farisai Muzenda
- Mbonisi Ndebele
- Ger Sampson
- Nigel Simons
- Dot Squier
- Almamy Taal
- Gloria Tafirenyuka
- Pam Turton
- Judy Twedde
- Naoko Uehara
- Angela Walker
- Winifred Zulu



During the year the projects also depended heavily upon the commitment and support of Hope Projects Steering Group members, workers at our partner-organisations, our trustees, and individual supporters – many of whom joined us at the annual Hope Lunch on 3 February 2012. Our thanks also go to Birmingham Law Centre and Birmingham Asian Resource Centre for providing space and facilities to the Hope workers.

## Six Hope Projects case-studies

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

**C** is a 36-year-old from Afghanistan who arrived in the UK and claimed asylum in February 2009. His claim was refused in February 2010, his support from the UK Border Agency was terminated, and he became homeless and destitute, surviving solely on the help he could get from friends, acquaintances, and a few small charities.

The organisation Freedom from Torture approached Hope's partner-organisation ASIRT on C's behalf in October 2010, being very concerned about his mental and physical health. He had been diagnosed as suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder and depression and from chronic headaches, as well as kidney problems. He had scars on his head caused by torture by the Taliban.

Freedom from Torture had referred C to the local authority's Social Services department for assessment with a view to support being provided under the National Assistance Act, but Social Services had refused to support him.

C was initially referred to the Destitution Fund for financial support while ASIRT requested a medical report from Freedom from Torture. C was unable to get legal representation from a solicitor because there was no Legal Aid available for

“K is a 70-year-old Somali woman who was completely destitute and sleeping on the floor of a mosque when she was first referred,,

his case, so ASIRT took the case on. Freedom from Torture agreed to prepare a report for free, and it was completed in July 2011.

For all this time C was surviving solely on grants from the Hope Destitution Fund.

The report concluded that C had physical and psychological symptoms highly consistent with past experience of torture. This enabled ASIRT to refer C to a Legal-Aid-funded solicitor to prepare fresh asylum submission.

Unable to stay any longer with a friend, C then became homeless. He was referred to Hope Housing, whose referrals-panel agreed to provide him with a room in a shared house, where he has been staying since.

The solicitor completed the fresh asylum submission in November 2011 and submitted it to the UKBA. Shortly after this, C was detained and threatened with deportation back to Afghanistan. This contravened the UKBA's own guidance, which says that victims of torture recognised by Freedom from Torture should not be detained.

About three weeks later C's solicitor secured his release from detention by threatening Judicial Review proceedings, but this release was dependent upon an undertaking that he could return to Hope Housing accommodation.

Another Hope partner-organisation, the Refugee Council, then submitted an

application for UKBA support, to which C should now be entitled. However, many weeks later, and after prolonged arguments about the type of support that should be provided, C is at the time of writing still supported and accommodated by the Hope Destitution Fund and Hope Housing while we wait for his UKBA support-package finally to be delivered.

**K** is a 70-year-old Somali woman who was completely destitute and sleeping on the floor of a mosque at the time she was first referred to us. Her initial claim for asylum had been refused, and the refusal upheld at appeal, with the Immigration Judge casting doubt over whether K was really Somali because of her unfamiliarity with Italian. (K is illiterate, and struggles to write her own name). We were able to provide support and a roof over her head while ASIRT worked to prepare a fresh claim for asylum.

K has made contact with two family members in this country, both of whom have been recognised as members of a Somali minority clan and so granted refugee status. They have provided testimony detailing the nature of their relationship with K. Additionally, a 20-page "expert report" has concluded, on the basis of linguistic analysis and other factors, that K is a member of the Banadiri clan, recognised as being persecuted in Somalia, and that she is therefore in need of protection. This report, together with references to recent caselaw, formed the basis of ASIRT's fresh representations.



These representations were rejected by the UKBA just five days after they were submitted. The testimony from the relatives was dismissed as adding “no weight” to K’s claim, on the basis that it contained “the authors’ unsubstantiated claims that they have known you in Somalia”, and had failed to provide “any other substantiating evidence to demonstrate that the claimed relationships are genuine”.

Similarly, the expert report was dismissed as adding “no weight” to K’s claim because an Immigration Judge had previously found K not to be credible, and because the report’s author “works as an advice worker for the Somali community providing advice and assistance to Somali refugees and asylum seekers and so it is considered that his role as an expert is not impartial and there is a conflict of interest”.

Finally, the UKBA’s refusal dismissed legal arguments based on a European Court of Human Rights judgement which had concluded that returnees to Somalia were demonstrably at risk of treatment breaching their human rights unless links to powerful agents of protection could clearly be established. The UKBA said that the Secretary of State had sought permission to appeal against the ECHR judgement, which was therefore “not final”, and could be ignored.

K’s application to the UKBA for accommodation and support under Section 4 of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999 was simultaneously refused on the basis of the rejection of her fresh submissions. K has continued to be

dependent on the accommodation and support provided by the Hope Projects.

ASIRT is now working with another Hope partner-organisation, Birmingham Law Centre, to challenge what appears to be an entirely unlawful course of action on the UKBA’s part. At the time of writing, Judicial Review proceedings have begun.

**G**, from Eritrea, was referred to the Hope Projects when her support from the UK Border Agency was terminated, and was provided with accommodation and financial support through Hope Housing and the Destitution Fund.

Although G had a solicitor representing her, the firm was based in London and G was finding it increasingly difficult to communicate with them. ASIRT and a Hope Projects worker spent some time assisting her in her communication with the solicitor, and eventually a fresh claim was submitted which allowed the Hope worker to apply for UKBA “Section-4” support on G’s behalf.

Unfortunately the fresh claim was quickly refused and so the “Section-4” application, which relied upon the fresh claim, was also unsuccessful.

At G’s request ASIRT took over her representation from the solicitor and are currently working on helping G to gather new evidence for a new fresh claim.

In the meantime G told us that she was pregnant. This gave her another entitlement to “Section-4” support, which she was eventually granted.

“ For two months M was held in detention, and then slept rough on the street. He is suffering from depression and mental-health problems,,

However, she was placed in accommodation outside of the West Midlands and was very concerned that she would be unable to continue her ante-natal care in Birmingham. ASIRT liaised with the UKBA to explain the situation and after a week G was moved back into Birmingham, where she is able to access her health-care and is close to her established support networks; and she is now awaiting the birth of her baby. She has recently received a one-off grant from the Hope Fund for Children.

**M** is an Eritrean national who claimed asylum in 2005. He was supported by the UKBA until August 2011; then for two months he was held in detention, and then slept rough on the street. M applied for voluntary return to Eritrea in February 2012, but needs support to avoid destitution whilst his application to return is processed.

M is suffering from depression and mental-health problems. He has applied for UKBA “Section-4” support and was referred to the Hope Destitution Fund and Hope Housing by partner-organisation the Refugee Council. He is being supported and accommodated by Hope while the UKBA consider his application.

**H**, from Zimbabwe, claimed asylum in 2006. She is HIV-positive. H’s boyfriend, who was accommodating and supporting her, ended their relationship and told her to move out.

H is now in Hope Housing accommodation and supported by the Destitution Fund while the UKBA consider her application for “Section-4” support.

**L** is a destitute 30-year-old pregnant woman from Zimbabwe, who has been staying from place to place. She is legally represented by Hope partner-organisation Lifeline Options, who initiated Judicial Review proceedings over the UKBA’s refusal to support her.

L was provided with emergency accommodation by Hope Housing, whose Support Worker also helped her to register with a GP and referred her to the Bethel Doula Project for other maternity support. She has recently been accommodated by the UKBA “Section-4” team in a hostel.



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](mailto:admin@hope-projects.org.uk) or through our Web site at <http://www.hope-projects.org.uk/>.



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