

hope
projects
report
12/13

hope projects



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This report covers the year ended 31 March 2013. In March 2013 we celebrated the tenth anniversary of our work - the Destitution Fund was launched in 2003 (then managed by Birmingham Law Centre).

Introduction

The Hope Projects work to help destitute asylum seekers and some others barred from public funds in Birmingham and the West Midlands. There are currently five main Hope projects:

- **the Hope Destitution Fund**, making fortnightly cash grants to destitute asylum seekers,
- **Hope Housing**, providing emergency accommodation for homeless asylum seekers,
- **the Hope Fund for Children**, making one-off grants to mothers of small children who are barred from recourse to public funds,
- **Ujamaa**, providing specialist counselling and advice/casework support for asylum-seeker and refugee women, and
- **the Hope Special Fund**, making one-off grants for purposes not covered by other Funds.

There are two sub-projects of Hope Housing:

- **the Hope Knitting Group** (also known as **Kuwadzana U-Knitty**),
- **the Hope Gardeners** project (also known as **Kushinga Community Garden**).

Other projects initiated by Hope Projects during the year 2012/13 include

- **the Advice Birmingham partnership**, and
- **the Migrants' Union**.

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

Hope Destitution Fund

Asylum seekers are barred from recourse to public funds, including all welfare benefits and mainstream provision for the homeless.

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. Payments 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,
- Refugee Action,
- the Refugee Council,
- the Refugee and Migrant Centre of the Black Country, and
- Restore (Birmingham Churches Together for Asylum Seekers and Refugees),

together with workers and volunteers from the Hope Projects. All of these organisations are also represented on the

“Asylum seekers are barred from recourse to public funds, including all welfare benefits and mainstream provision for the homeless”

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, 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.pdf.

The current rates of payment are normally £20 a week for adults and £15 a week for children.

Fund-raising

In the financial year 2012/13, £72,509 was raised for disbursement in grants to destitute individuals and families, from grant-making trusts, individuals and faith groups. Funders included:

- the Bryant Trust,
- the Grimmitt Trust,
- Refugee Action, and
- the Roughley Trust.

And our partner-organisation the Children's Society Midlands Refugee Project gave £9,000 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, page 7).

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.

Since the Fund was started in 2003, more than £800,000 has been raised for disbursement.

Grant-giving

In the financial year 2012/13 £66,081 was disbursed from the Fund.

We closed 260 cases during the year. Of these there were 93 female single adults, 157 male single adults, and 10 couples. Closed cases included 38 children and 10 pregnant women.

Clients came from 44 different countries:

Abkhazia	1	Kuwait	1
Afghanistan	11	Liberia	3
Albania	1	Libya	3
Algeria	8	Malawi	2
Angola	1	Mexico	1
Botswana	1	Namibia	1
Cameroon	4	Niger	1
China	2	Nigeria	14
DR Congo	7	Pakistan	6
Egypt	1	Palestine	6
Eritrea	28	Romania	1
Ethiopia	1	Rwanda	2
Gambia	3	Senegal	2
Ghana	1	Sierra Leone	1
Guinea	4	Somalia	10
India	1	South Africa	1



Iran	26	Sri Lanka	2
Iraq	16	Sudan	8
Ivory Coast	5	Togo	1
Jamaica	4	Uganda	4
Kenya	8	Yemen	1
Kurdish	2	Zimbabwe	53

Giving to the Fund

Online donations to the Destitution Fund can be made through our Web site, at 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, including most hostels and night-shelters.

In 2012/13 we accommodated 48 women (6 pregnant) and 33 men, with 8 children.

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

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

Applications from our referral-agencies

are considered each week through email by a panel including Hope workers and trustees and other co-opted members.

Over the year 2012/13 Hope Housing continued to manage 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 cash 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 licences 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 A B Charitable Trust,
- the Austin and Hope PilkingtonTrust,
- the Bryant Trust,
- the William A Cadbury Trust,
- the Cole Charitable Trust,
- the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation,
- the Eveson Charitable Trust,
- the Friends Hall Farm Street Trust,
- the Leigh Trust,
- the Metropolitan Support Trust,
- the Roughley Trust,

“ In 2012/13 we accommodated 48 women (6 pregnant) and 33 men, with 8 children. Our adult residents were of 26 different nationalities,,

- the Sheldon Trust,
- the South Birmingham Friends Institute Trust,
- the C B and H H Taylor Trust, and
- the Garfield Weston Foundation.

Our adult residents were of 26 different nationalities:

Abkhazia	1	Libya	1
Afghanistan	2	Mexico	1
Algeria	2	Namibia	1
Cameroon	2	Niger	1
China	2	Nigeria	2
DR Congo	2	Pakistan	1
Eritrea	8	Palestine	3
Ethiopia	1	Sierra Leone	1
Guinea	1	Somalia	2
Iran	11	South Africa	1
Iraq	4	Sri Lanka	1
Jamaica	1	Sudan	1
Liberia	1	Zimbabwe	27

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

Depression, stress, insomnia, high blood pressure
 Recently lost wife to cancer, depression
 Distress
 Severe back, stomach and head pains
 Heart problems
 In treatment for TB
 Depression and back pain
 Depression
 Mental health problem
 Depression, possible multiple personalities
 Diabetes, complications with pregnancy

Depression following an abortion, issues with access to GP

Multiple medical problems

Polyp on womb removed; unknown medical issues – died

Stomach operation

Mental health – suicide attempts, strong medication, psychiatric treatment

Mental health in past

Arthritis of knees, asthma, tinnitus

Life-threatening illness

Diabetic, high cholesterol, depression and anxiety; daughters: sleeping trouble and anxiety

Taking medication for tumour removed from pituitary gland

High blood pressure

Chest infection, hot flushes

High blood pressure

High blood pressure, palpitations, anxiety, sleeping problems.

Life-threatening illness, asthma

Life-threatening chronic blood disorder – prone to opportunistic infections

HIV-positive, needs constant access to food

Breathing issues

Back problems, high blood pressure

Hip replacement due to osteoporosis, long-term blood condition

Gangrene in left arm, foreign object in right arm

Diabetic, high blood pressure

Depression, PTSD



We continued to use our largest property 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.

The search for larger properties

We have been seeking one or more larger, hostel-type properties from housing associations or the City Council. Management and running costs for the properties would be financed on a "mixed-use" basis, with residents who have recently obtained leave to remain in the UK (and so can work, and claim Housing Benefit) paying rent to subsidise the asylum-seeker residents who are "barred from recourse to public funds".

Coventry Peace House

There is no night-shelter in Birmingham that regularly accepts homeless asylum seekers. We therefore rely on our partner-organisation the Coventry Peace House, with very little funding but a huge commitment from its volunteers, to provide basic emergency overnight accommodation in cases where we cannot help street-homeless people immediately.

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 (Kuwadzana U-Knitty) meets every Monday in one of the Hope houses, teaching the basics to women new to knitting, and providing 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.

Towards the end of the year the group fulfilled a contract to provide a local NHS Primary Care Trust with 500 knitted woollen breasts, for use in breast-feeding education work, for a fee to Hope Projects of £2,225

Hope Gardeners (Kushinga Community Gardens) 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

“This new project provides traumatised female asylum seekers and refugees with professional counselling and support,,

the local community a garden to work on together – to be creative, promote interpersonal relationships, keep minds and bodies active, and provide nutritious food.

Housing and Migration Network

During the year the Housing and Migration Network, based in London, promoted Hope Housing's work as a model for the development of emergency-accommodation projects for asylum seekers and other new migrants in other parts of the country. Together with the Joseph Rowntree Foundation and Metropolitan they published *Housing Associations and Provision for Destitute Migrants*, a practice-pack based on our work.

The pack is available from our Web site at http://www.hope-projects.org.uk/PDFs/Destitution_Practice_Pack.pdf.

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 small children barred from recourse to public funds in and around Birmingham (including non-asylum-seekers).

During 2012/13 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 Projects 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 social and health workers.

During the year a total of £4,625 was disbursed to 37 beneficiaries. The balance of the Children's Society's £9,000 grant for the year was used for payments from the Hope Destitution Fund to women with small children.

Application forms for grants from the Hope Fund for Children are available on the Hope Projects Web site at <http://www.hope-projects.org.uk/node/5>.

Ujamaa

This new project, funded by a grant from Comic Relief, provides traumatised female asylum seekers and refugees with professional counselling, and with other one-to-one support, advice and information services.

Ujamaa is operated in partnership with the Rape and Sexual Violence Project (RSVP), Freedom from Torture and ASIRT.

The project will also run training courses for professionals and community groups around issues faced by such women.



Hope Special Fund

In 2011/12 a group of Hope Projects supporters in Lichfield undertook to raise money for a new fund, the **Hope Special 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 reports to support asylum applications, and other one-off needs.

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

Advice Birmingham

During the year Hope Projects workers, together with Hope trustee Ranjit Sondhi, took the initiative to establish **Advice Birmingham**, a partnership of advice and casework agencies in Birmingham who are working together to develop new ways of delivering advice and casework in response to drastic cuts in the availability of Legal Aid and of other funding for advice and casework services.

The partnership is currently resourced and serviced by Hope Projects and chaired by Ranjit, but is in the process of forming itself into an independent Charitable Association.

Advice Birmingham's Web site is at <http://www.advice-birmingham.net>.

Migrants' Union

One project being developed from Advice Birmingham is the **Migrants' Union**, which is being led by Hope Projects volunteer Mark Phillips (formerly senior immigration solicitor with Tyndallwoods Solicitors in Birmingham).

The Union will have a membership including asylum seekers and other new migrants who are seeking to regularise or extend their immigration status, together with others who have succeeded in this, and will give practical mutual support to members submitting asylum and human-rights claims.

The Union will initially be serviced and resourced by the Hope Projects, working with other member-organisations of Advice Birmingham. But the Union will be autonomous, and members will themselves determine what support and resources they need (e.g. advice on members' cases, information and training, office facilities).

Birmingham University Practitioner Research Programme

Hope Projects are a member of the Practitioner Research Programme working to understand issues and suggest policy solutions to new migration and super-diversity in Birmingham. This network will allow information-sharing and joint funding applications for research, developing skills to understand and respond to population change in the city.

“We depend on the commitment of volunteers, partner-organisations, trustees and individual supporters,”

Casework

Hope Project workers continued to undertake some casework. This mainly involved making applications for UKBA or local-authority support for Hope Projects clients, and particularly Hope Housing residents.

- Rosemary Crawley
- Sue Fallon
- Reem Frjo
- Sohaila Kateaa
- Linda McLeod
- Marie Mezatio
- Muna Edris Mohamed
- Felipe Molina
- Farisai Muzenda
- Mark Phillips
- Ger Sampson
- Dot Squier
- Almamy Taal
- Gloria Tafirenyuka

Hope Projects people

Trustees

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

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 tenth-anniversary celebration on 12 March 2013.

Workers and volunteers during 2012/13

Workers:

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

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

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

Volunteers included:

- Kaveh Alqassi
- Rose Basada
- Nicky Clarke



Hope Projects case-studies

These case-studies illustrate how the Hope Projects and our Housing Support Worker, working with our partner-organisations, can often provide support which goes beyond cash and accommodation.

M, a Palestinian man, was referred to the Hope Projects through the national NACCOM (No Accommodation) network from a project in the north-east of England, as he had contacts in Birmingham. He had been staying in a night-shelter, but was suffering from depression and losing the will to live. He was accommodated by Hope Housing and supported by the Hope Destitution Fund.

He applied for UK Border Agency “section 4” support and accommodation on the basis of an immigration application to the European courts, but his “section 4” application was refused and an appeal dismissed; the appeal judge said that he needed first to exhaust the UK immigration system.

The Hope Housing Support Worker found him a solicitor in Birmingham who made an application for Judicial Review. On the basis of this **M** reapplied for UKBA support and accommodation, and succeeded at appeal. He is now awaiting a move to “section 4” accommodation.

M needed ongoing support from the

Housing Support Worker, particularly in understanding and pursuing his asylum case; she attended solicitor-appointments with him and afterwards explained to him what had been said at the appointment,

He also benefited from support from a volunteer at Hope partner-organisation the British Red Cross, where he attended therapeutic massage sessions. He could discuss his medical appointments with the volunteer, who attended the appointments with him.

And he joined the Hope Gardeners project, where he found support from other gardeners, improving his language skills and growing food to eat.

A, an Eritrean woman, was referred to Hope by the Red Cross, and was supported and accommodated by the Hope Housing project. Another Hope partner-organisation, Lifeline Options, took on her legal representation and helped her to collect evidence for a fresh asylum claim.

Our Housing Support Worker assisted her in obtaining an “HC2” form entitling her to NHS treatment (she suffers from an ear condition), and in enrolling in English-language classes. A befriender from Hope partner Restore helped her with English and with attending medical appointments – she was missing appointments because she didn’t understand the letters.

When a party from the Metropolitan Migration Foundation visited Hope Housing in January, **A** cooked delicious

“Freedom from Torture has helped **S** find representatives to assist him in making a fresh claim once their report is completed”

Eritrean food for their lunch, and repeated this at Hope's tenth-anniversary event in March. She is now enrolling with other Hope residents in a food-safety course, with support from her Restore befriender.

Lifeline Options have submitted a fresh asylum claim for **A**, and the Red Cross have applied for UKBA “section 4” support, assisted by our Support Worker and another Hope resident who acted as an interpreter.

F, a Zimbabwean woman with a young baby, was referred to Hope as homeless by the Refugee and Migrant Centre of the Black Country, late on a Friday afternoon, after they had been refused support by the local authority's social services department.

We were able to accommodate them that day, and sought advice on **F**'s case from partner-organisation ASIRT. **F** attended ASIRT's drop-in-advice session the following Thursday; they took up the case with the local authority, and she and her baby were quickly given support and accommodation by social services on the basis of recent case-law relating to children whose fathers are British or have leave to remain here.

S came to the UK two years ago after he was arrested and suffered torture in Iran. He suffers from depression, memory loss, anxiety, suicidal ideation, nightmares and recurring headaches. **S** has had involvement with mental-health

services and is on anti-depressant medication. He had claimed asylum but this was refused, and an appeal against the decision was dismissed. **S**'s solicitors then went into administration. Hope partner-organisation ASIRT referred **S** to another Hope partner, Freedom from Torture.

Freedom from Torture has helped **S** find new legal representatives to assist him in making a fresh asylum claim once their report on his case is completed.

When **S** was evicted from his accommodation after his asylum claim was refused, he received help from a local family. But some of the family members did not want him at the accommodation and were increasingly hostile. Letters detailing very personal aspects of his life and experience in Iran were opened by members of the family. This information was shared with the wider community and **S** felt increasingly threatened.

A referral was made to the Hope Projects and **S** was granted fortnightly cash support from the Hope Destitution Fund and accommodated by Hope Housing.

ASIRT have referred his case to the local authority's Social Services Adults Team for support, and at the time of writing are still awaiting the outcome of the local authority's assessment.



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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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