



# City of Sanctuary

## still human still here

The campaign to end destitution of refused asylum seekers

Ending Asylum Destitution – Bristol Conference 6<sup>th</sup> March 2015

### Examples of Action Being Taken by Local Councils

#### 1. Council Motions

Between January 2013 and September 2014, 12 councils have passed motions condemning the government policy on enforced destitution for refused asylum seekers:

[Glasgow Council motion on destitution 28.6.12](#)

[Bristol Council motion on destitution 15.1.13](#)

[Sheffield Council motion on destitution 3.4.13](#)

[Oxford Council motion on destitution 22.4.13](#)

[Bradford Council motion on destitution 9.7.13](#)

[Leeds Council motion on destitution 17.7.13](#)

[Liverpool Council motion on destitution 18.9.13](#)

[Kirklees Council motion on destitution 15.1.14](#)

[Swansea Council motion on destitution 21.1.14](#)

[Leicester Council motion on destitution 20.3.14](#)

[Manchester Council motion on destitution 26.3.14](#)

[Coventry Council Motion on destitution 9.9.14](#)

The motions will be available in full at the conference. Or they can be viewed at <https://ashamanchester.wordpress.com/council-motions-on-asylum-destitution/>

## 1. Supporting the Refugee Voluntary Sector

- Fund or provide relief to organisations who are in a position to help prevent the destitution of asylum seekers

### **Kirklees and Bradford examples**

*In late 2014, Destitute Asylum Seekers Huddersfield (DASH) received £10,000 from Kirklees Council Community Partnerships to support their work with destitute refugees and asylum seekers in Huddersfield. Thanks to this money, DASH is able to continue to provide essential support to those made destitute in the asylum process, both limiting and preventing the devastating effects of destitution.*

*Bradford Action for Refugees (BAfR) also receive funding from Bradford Metropolitan District Council for their work with asylum seeking and refugee families and children.*

*Bristol City Council has provided substantial funding for 3 voluntary sector organisations providing a range of services for ASR including destitute asylum seekers. This funding has been protected despite the need to cut community investment grants across the board, along with other council savings.*

- Fund organisations who are in a position to help prevent the destitution of asylum seekers through advice: e.g.

### **Manchester**

*Greater Manchester Immigration Aid Unit is funded by council to provide advice to those with No Recourse to Public Funds*

### **Bristol**

*Avon and Bristol Law Centre grant aided by the City Council funded. ABLC is thus enabled to hold a legal aid contract to provide immigration and asylum advice, including to those with No Recourse to Public Funds, as well as to refused asylum seekers wishing to make fresh claims. This can bring refused asylum seekers out of destitution. Bristol City Council also fund Bristol Refugee Action office to deliver 2 days of specialist advice and to make representation on Section 4 applications and appeals for destitute asylum seekers*

- Encourage closer working relationships with the voluntary sector through a designated officer to provide help, support and advice to applicants and enable a coordinated response to relevant issues.

### **Blackburn example**

*Blackburn with Darwen Council employ an Asylum, Refugee and HMO Co-ordination Officer who is responsible for running a Multi-Agency Forum, bringing together all the statutory and voluntary services involved in supporting people seeking asylum in the borough. The Officer is the administrator for the procurement process for new accommodation, also provides signposting support for individuals at drop-ins, and has a watching brief on the general welfare and support for asylum seekers and refugees.*

## Liverpool

Liverpool has a specialised social worker for individuals with NRPF and Leeds has a designated officer to ensure joined up policy on asylum and facilitate access to council resources for the voluntary sector where appropriate.

## 2. Housing and Homelessness

- Include destitution amongst asylum seekers and refugees in the authority's homelessness strategy and Joint Strategic Needs Assessment.

### Liverpool example

*In 2014, Liverpool City Council commissioned a special report on the 'health needs of people seeking asylum and refugees in Liverpool' to feed into their Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA). The research gave an overview of the demographics of asylum seeker and refugee communities in Liverpool, examined their health needs and gaps in service provision, before making recommendations for service delivery.*

- Set up a working group on asylum accommodation involving appropriate individuals (e.g. from communities, schools admissions and health teams, the third sector and the local accommodation provider) to resolve issues around accommodation and ensure standards are met.

### Kirklees & Bradford examples

*In response to continuing problems with accommodation provision under the COMPASS contracts, Council Officers within Kirklees Council have set up a working group aiming to ensure that all partners in the Council are aware of the COMPASS contracts and advise on appropriate areas for property procurement (including considerations of access to support agencies, local property availability, availability of school places, availability of GP and health services, and community tension issues).*

*Bradford City Council have also used their powers in relation to Houses of Multiple Occupancy licensing to ensure that COMPASS housing providers do not force unrelated single asylum seekers to share bedrooms in properties in Bradford.*

## 3. Health and Social Services

- Review whether the locally enhanced services contracted from GPs by clinical commissioners are providing adequate and effective services to asylum seekers and refugees and take action as appropriate.

**Example from Salford, which involved a report written by the voluntary sector and then an internal review carried out by the CCG.**

## **Bristol**

*A local award winning service, The Haven, (specialist GP asylum seeker screening unit), provides all round physical and mental well-being support and referral for all asylum seekers in Bristol. The Haven acts as a crucial link between voluntary and statutory services in support of Bristol asylum seekers and refugees.*

- Ensure that any child on asylum support or who is supported by local authorities is given free school meals.

## **No local examples known, but**

*General guidance states that children are entitled to Free School Meals if you are in receipt of support under part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999 (Section 95, Section 98). However, it is less clear whether children whose parents are supported under part IV of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999 (Section 4) are entitled to Free School Meals.*

- Ensure that Social Services work in partnership with the voluntary sector to identify asylum seekers who need support and that existing powers, including under the National Assistance Act, the Chronically Sick and Disabled Act, 1970, the NHS Act 2006, Children's Act 1989, etc. are used progressively to assist asylum seekers who are vulnerable and also to avoid destitution.

## **4. Training and Planning**

- Ensure that all council staff that are likely to have contact with asylum seekers receive training so that they are aware of the problems asylum seekers may face.

## **Liverpool**

*Liverpool City Council fund Refugee Action to run a 'Shared Awareness Project' offering asylum awareness training. The training is made available to councillors, local services, organisations and community groups.*

- Produce a report summarising the existing support services available to asylum seekers, including housing, training, education and legal advice

## **Leeds**

*In response to a deputation from local refugee organisations in May 2013, Leeds Council committed to writing a report providing the background to the causes and impact of asylum related destitution in Leeds. This included identifying key services providing support to destitute asylum seekers in the city and explaining the local authority's rights and responsibilities towards those with no recourse to public funds.*

- Undertake research with both local statutory and voluntary organisations to understand the full scale and nature of destitution amongst asylum seekers and how this can be best addressed.

**An example from Manchester, although this was voluntary-sector led, rather than statutory-sector led.**

- Hold a round table meeting involving council officers, Councillors, and third sector representatives to discuss council policy and agree an action plan to prevent and reduce destitution amongst asylum seekers.

**Leeds**

*The Leeds Migration Partnership has agreed to host a roundtable discussion in late February to share solutions and ideas for preventing asylum-related destitution in Leeds in 2015.*

- Produce a report summarising the existing support services available to asylum seekers, including housing, training, education and legal advice: some councils undertook to do this when passing motions.

**5. Integration and Welcome**

- Provide and/or facilitate free English classes to asylum seekers and refugees, including refused asylum seekers

**Leeds**

*Leeds Council have recently launched the Learning English in Leeds website which maps all types of English language learning provision in the city, including statutory, private and third sector providers.*

**Manchester**

*When access to ESOL for asylum seekers was reduced a few years back, ‘Multi Agency for Refugee Integration in Manchester’ (MARIM), part of Manchester City Council recruited volunteer English language teachers and helped ensure asylum seekers and refugees could still go to English classes in the city.*

**Bristol**

*European funding via the Migrants Impact Fund was used by BCC Learning Communities department, working closely with the voluntary sector, to establish a large number of community based language classes open to all ASR, and supported a one-to-one language mentoring programme using volunteers.*

- Seek to improve the integration of refugees so they can fulfil their potential and contribute to local communities.

### **Several examples**

*Some local integration strategies have accepted the importance of encouraging integration from the day of arrival rather than the day of status. Yorkshire and Humberside's 'Integration Strategy for Refugees and Asylum Seekers' (2009 – 2011) and Scotland's 'New Scots: Integrating Refugees in Scotland's Communities' (2014 – 2017) are good examples of progressive regional integration plans.*

*Leeds City Council have committed themselves to producing a 'Transition Guide' for new refugees, support organisations and Council Officers aiming to improve refugees' move-on experiences in the city. This is based on a Creative Commons Document published by Belfast City Council in 2014.*