

News

REFUGEE RESPONSE

SUPPORTED BY:



Catholic Care+



Introduction

In September 2015, Pope Francis called on the Catholic Community to respond generously and with mercy to the growing refugee crisis and across our Diocese we have certainly done this with energy and commitment.

The intensity of the crisis may have waned but refugees and asylum seekers continue to arrive in our country looking for security and peace and they often feel unwelcome and end up living in poverty and destitution. By doing things differently, we can make a real difference to their lives.

Over the last year I have met many individuals and visited organisations that are making a considerable contribution to this work and the range of involvement and the depth of people's compassion is inspiring.

I have heard from volunteers who tell their stories with such warmth and generosity and I am regularly hearing new examples of individuals, SVP and Parish groups that are supporting refugees and asylum seekers in one way or another.

"There is always something we can do to help, however, small it may seem, to make a big difference to the lives of our brothers and sisters looking for refuge"

Lucy Irven
Diocesan Refugee
Support Group
Facilitator



To mark Refugee Week 2018 we have taken a look back at how we have responded to the Pope's call to action in 2015.

The following pages show some of the highlights.

Our Response

2015 – 2017

October 2016

St. Monica's opened a new house, a former presbytery in South Leeds, to provide safe accommodation for 6 destitute asylum seeker women for up to 6 months.



June 2017

To mark Refugee Week schools in Leeds collected food and toiletries to make up Hampers of Hope which were then distributed across the city. The children spoke movingly about their concern and desire to help those who had escaped hardship.



November 2016

People from across the Diocese who so wanted to help these vulnerable people, were mobilised and given the message "we can achieve great things by working together with others already doing similar work". Over the next 6 months many parishes were visited encouraging people to become involved.

"We can achieve great things by working together with others already doing similar work."

July 2017

Our response was well underway with people from across the Diocese supporting organisations, providing essential services to asylum seekers and refugees, including: WYDAN night shelters, LASSN Grace Hosting, St. Augustine's C of E Church in Halifax and the Good Shepherd Centre in Keighley to name but a few.



September 2017



Share the Journey #sharejourney

Pope Francis launches "Share the Journey" Campaign: "Brothers and Sisters, do not be afraid to share the journey; do not be afraid to share the hope."

This international campaign calls on world leaders to work with the UN in agreeing two new compacts that will ensure countries welcome and protect refugees and migrants.

November 2017

Saw an increase in support from the parishes for the St. Vincent's Centre on York Road, Leeds and Meeting Point in Armley, Leeds. The latter is hosted by the Anglican Parish of Christ Church, Armley where they welcome over 100 people each week. Regular support comes in the form of food and clothing.

December 2017

Four parishes in Bradford hosted the Inn Churches winter shelter for the homeless, including St. Cuthbert's and First Martyrs who hosted for the first time over Christmas.



"None of us is an island, autonomous and independent from others. We can only build the future by standing together."

Our Response Continued in 2018

Bishop Marcus visits PAFRAS one year on

In January 2018 Bishop Marcus visited PAFRAS, Positive Action For Refugees and Asylum Seekers, in Harehills.

He spoke to the staff and experienced the business of the Wednesday drop-in which is attended by over 100 people each week. As well as providing a meal and drinks, destitute asylum seekers can access a range of support services. PAFRAS, together with the Red Cross, is responsible for almost all of the referrals for the hosting services of St. Monica's, WYDAN and Grace Hosting.

Later, on the same day, Bishop Marcus joined the Refugee Support Group for the One Year On event at Hinsley Hall. The event was very well attended and provided an excellent opportunity for networking and information sharing.

There was an introduction to the Community Sponsorship scheme presented by Sean Ryan, the National Co-ordinator for CSAN, and brief updates from St Vincent's Centre, Wakefield City of Sanctuary, the Conversation Club, St Monica's and Migration Yorkshire. We were greatly inspired by the enthusiasm of the volunteers from the Conversation Club and then very moved by the stories from two refugee volunteers from the Refugee Council. A market place of volunteer stalls was available for parishioners to find out more about the volunteering possibilities.

Throughout the evening it became obvious that there were many very talented and generous people from the Church and wider community all willing to work together to make a real difference.

WYDAN Night Shelter

The WYDAN night shelter for destitute asylum seekers opened for the third time this winter with support from many organisations across Leeds.

Parishioners from St Benedict's, Garforth, John Henry Newman and St John Mary Vianney Parishes have been inspired to take action for refugees and volunteered to help. They helped by welcoming the guests, making hot meals, washing bed linen and towels, playing games and chatting. This year the shelter was at full capacity almost every night providing over 800 nights of accommodation for 29 individuals.



The shelter is now planning to open all year round from August 2018 and of course this will need many more organisations to open their doors and more volunteers to get involved.

John Henry Newman Parish has offered to act as a host at the end of October while many volunteers from other parishes are ready to help out at other host organisations.

Our Response Continued in 2018

The Good

Shepherd Centre

The Good Shepherd Centre is helping a large number of asylum seekers who are now being accommodated by the Home Office in Keighley.

They have called for more volunteers to teach English and help out at their busy family drop-in on Fridays. This summer, as an additional enterprise, they are ready to open a charity shop for six weeks in Keighley town centre to sell some of the clothing and shoes that have been so generously donated. A social worker from Catholic Care is working with the Centre helping to support the families with young children.

The SVP Leeds Central Refugee and Asylum Fund has recently provided two new laptop computers to help expand their Computer facilities. The Centre offers computer lessons, and also operates as an Internet Café where the users (primarily Asylum Seekers and Refugees) can prepare their CVs, look for volunteering opportunities, carry out job searches and download documents and guidance relating to their asylum applications. It is planned that the Internet Café will be managed by two of the Refugees who currently volunteer at the Centre.

Community

Sponsorship Scheme

The Diocese launched its Community Sponsorship Scheme at Wheeler Hall on Wednesday 23 May at an information evening hosted by Sean Ryan from CSAN and Tom Finch of Citizens UK. There was also a presentation from the Home Office. A number of parishes were represented and interest was high. Catholic Care, a registered charity that undertakes social welfare on behalf of the Diocese, will act as Lead Sponsor for parish / community groups wanting to welcome a refugee family.

We are very pleased that we are working with a community group in Settle who have started on their journey to welcome a refugee family.



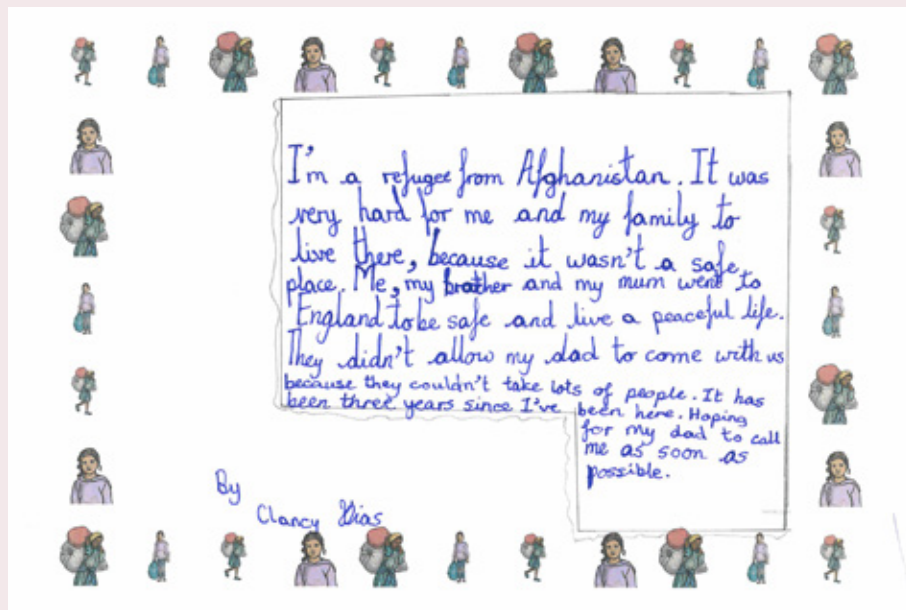
Refugee Week

This year, Refugee Week celebrated its 20th anniversary and to raise awareness amongst the younger members of our community, schools in the Diocese were asked to write Poems of Hope on the theme of migration and refugees as part of a competition. The response has been amazing. Some of the poems brought tears to our eyes whilst others

Refugee Week



expressed great empathy with the plight of refugees and others offered a real sense of hope.



Our Response Continued in 2018

The Gianna Project

The Gianna Project, supporting mums and their babies during and after pregnancy, run by Catholic Care, continues to go from strength to strength with 72 referrals during 2018. The project leader, Eileen O'Malley says, "We are getting an increasing number of referrals for refugee women and asylum seeking families in need of assistance. They come to us from various agencies including the British Red Cross, PAFRAS, Refugee Action, Health Visitors & Midwives."

During May and June about half of referrals were for women either asylum seekers or refugees with no recourse to public funds and very little to help them to prepare for the birth of their baby.

Thanks to the generosity of their ever increasing number of supporters, they continue to be able to pass on a wide selection of good quality baby goods from clothes, Moses baskets, cots, toys, prams, knitwear & baby toiletries.

This summer they have invited the families on the first Gianna Family Day out to Eureka Children's Museum in Halifax.

"We are hoping to bring people of different nationalities & from different towns in Yorkshire, together for a fun day out."



UN World Refugee Day 2018

For the UN World Refugee Day on 20 June 2018, **Bishop Paul McAleenan**, Lead Bishop for Migrants and Refugees, Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales, issued the following statement.

"I call on our society as a whole to reflect on how we can better help refugees, both through welcoming them into our society and communities, and through supporting refugees globally.

In his message for Migrants and Refugees, Pope Francis said "our shared response may be articulated by four verbs: to welcome, to protect, to promote and to integrate" (Jan 2018).

A society is judged by how it treats the most vulnerable within it, and in England and Wales we must do more.

Refugees and asylum seekers must be integrated and their cause promoted so they can flourish and contribute to our society. We must recognise the value and gifts that they bring – instead many currently face barriers to work, effectively barring them from our society."

Extract from <http://www.catholicnews.org.uk/Home/News/UN-World-Refugee-Day>

Support the work of the Diocesan Refugee Support Group

If you would like to support the work of the Diocese to support refugees and asylum seekers you might like to consider funding our next Newsletter due out in the Autumn. Alternatively, you could make a donation towards the cost of a booklet of Poems of Hope from our Refugee Week competition.

Please contact Lucy Irven at lirven@catholic-care.org.uk for further information on any of the organisations, news items or if you would like to help in any way.

"Now, more than ever, taking care of refugees must be a global – and shared – responsibility. It's time to do things differently"

Filippo Grandi, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, World Refugee Day, June 2018.