



Churches Together in the Merseyside Region

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SUPPORT FOR ASYLUM SEEKERS S.A.S

Dear Friends,

Report – December 2017

At this time of year we think about a particular family who were in search of refuge, unable to return to their home as their lives were in peril. Sadly we have many such examples here on Merseyside of people seeking asylum or refuge, and some are destitute – no home and no access to public funds. The numbers of people being newly dispersed to local areas such as St Helens, Knowsley and Halton are growing. A large proportion of those in time will be refused leave to stay and will in turn become destitute. The need for us all to “welcome the stranger” has never been greater. To be Christian and not welcome the stranger are incompatible. It is our moral duty and privilege to answer that call.

With help from friends and supporters SAS can continue to support the work of local partner agencies to relieve the deprivation of these marginalised people, give them hope and improve their wellbeing.

“I have seen the white soul
Of home-longings of alien peoples.
I have seen their relief;
How they build themselves out of pure beauties
New homes among strangers.
I have tasted their grief.....”

From : “A Child of the Ghetto” by Malcolm Guite.

Presidents

The Most Rev'd Malcolm McMahon, The Archbishop of Liverpool
The Right Rev'd Paul Bayes, The Bishop of Liverpool
The Rev'd Dr Sheryl M Anderson, Chair of the Liverpool Methodist District
The Rev'd Jacky Embrey, Moderator of the Mersey Synod of the United Reformed Church
The Rev'd Phil Jump, Regional Minister, North West Baptist Association
Major Drew McCombe, North-Western Divisional Commander, Salvation Army

(Churches Together in the Merseyside Region is a registered charity, No.519061)

Financial Statements

Attached is a summary statement of financial activities for the 10 months to October 2017 with comparative figures for the full year to December 2016, grouped under relevant headings of income and expenditure. This shows a net surplus for January to October of £20,030. Since the last update in June 2017 we have been able to maintain the basic monthly cap on grants to Asylum Link Merseyside [ALM] at £2,900. This cap is reviewed regularly.

We received grants from:

- LCVS [Everyday Changes Fund] of £1,650
- Liverpool Archdiocese from 2016 Lenten Alms of £18,944
- Cross and Passion Order in Manchester of £20,000

27 individual donors continued to support SAS by either standing orders or individual donations. One anonymous individual donated £300 and one widowed lady continues to donate cash each week from her pension specifically for the fruit project.

SAS has continued to maintain a contribution an average of £230 per month to the fruit project at ALM.

SAS contributed to the ALM Destitution Project £29.2k in the first 10 months of 2017. This covered emergency support grants for individuals, food, toiletries, fruit and £25.7k for emergency accommodation.

SAS contributed £8.8k for individual support grants and support for wellbeing projects delivered by other agencies including MRANG [Merseyside Refugee and Asylum Seekers Pre and Post Natal Support Group], Faiths4Change and the Merseyside Probation Service.

SAS had one expense item of £1,524 which related to the printing costs for publication of the new ESOL pamphlet – “Refugees & Asylum Seekers: Welcome the Stranger: supporting English Language Learning”.

Properties and Emergency Accommodation

There are still currently 250+ registered as destitute with ALM of which we are only able to provide emergency accommodation to less than 10% of that figure.

ALM leased two additional properties in 2017 but they have proved problematic, so ALM have cancelled one, and are in the process of cancelling the second. At the same time we have leased a vacant former Anglican presbytery so we will be able to accommodate up to 6 additional people from February 2018.

The plan to start a Night Shelter Scheme from February 2017, similar to the BOAZ model in Manchester, has been postponed yet again. Funding is still being sought to employ a Co-ordinator.

We still have 7 local churches willing to provide a venue and volunteers to participate in the Scheme.

SAS Support via Other Agencies

ALM

ALM continues to deliver on the ground the majority of the SAS Destitution Project. Approximately 80% of SAS funding is channelled through the work of ALM. This provides emergency grants to the destitute and contributes substantially towards emergency accommodation.

On average 50 to 60 destitute people receive food and toiletries each Friday. Emergency rations and clothes are also provided whenever necessary.

Breakfasts, usually porridge and hot drinks, are still being provided routinely. As we approach winter this is a particularly difficult time for the destitute, and such humanitarian provision is a lifeline for them.

The fruit project continues to provide at least one piece of fruit each day to every visitor to ALM. I wish we could provide more!

SAS has funded the “Places to Go and things to do” initiative at ALM, instigated by Bridie Sharkey, to complement the ESOL lessons at ALM. See Bridie’s note and photo below:

“...Here's a pic of our Chester Zoo trip with some students and their children, on 24th August. The Sudanese family had not really had any day out all summer. It was great. The elephants were a big hit...see below. I used the money from your fund to pay for it. Thank you so much Bridie.....”

The faces say it ALL!!!



Faiths4Change

Annie Merry, CEO at Faiths4Change has reported back on some of their work which SAS has helped to fund:

“...We have lots of other work going on at present in Liverpool, St Helen’s, Bootle and Skelmersdale – Liz, Kat & Lilli are very busy with delivering projects and services bringing dispersed Asylum Seekers and settled communities together, engaging people accessing foodbank services in food and nutrition cook together sessions, working with people using long term mental health services in collective art for exhibition and a weekly connect with the garden and nature contract with women living in a Christian run women’s

bail hostel. We've also been asked to put in an application to deliver a range of work by the Northwood Community Board to bring together local residents including recently dispersed Asylum Seekers.”

“...During the last 3 months regular SAS funding has been used to support people seeking asylum to attend our weekly arts group at St Andrew's Church, St Helens – literally, it pays for their bus fare. The weekly arts group aims to bring together St Helens residents – both settled community and people seeking asylum and refuge – to get to know each other while creating art for display together (see photo below). The project funded by Eleanor Rathbone Charitable Trust and the Common Good Fund, enables Faiths4Change to deliver supported weekly art sessions using unwanted materials with 12 groups in St Helens – connecting residents of different ages, beliefs and from different cultures and backgrounds. The project will culminate in a shared art exhibition in St Helens in spring 2018. ...”



“ ...Originally SAS funding was provided to support 3 Afghani Sikh ladies to attend the group regularly, the ladies are still attending and being supported and so are others; the funding also pays for materials....

Liz Atherton, our Arts & Wellbeing Coordinator advises:

“We've been able to create a close and supportive group, bringing together asylum seekers and local residents, who meet weekly for shared conversation and crafts. The group has worked together to create textile banners for the church hall at St Andrews and we are now making sewn items to give as gifts. The group has created a network of friends, a focal point for some people's week, a chance to learn new skills and to share old skills with others. Majeeda, from Iraq, has fixed our sewing machine. Ardip and Paramjeet, from Afghanistan, have taught us all to crochet. Heera, from Afghanistan has even taught Jan how to use snapchat! The group has also opened up conversations with the wider community about what it means to be an asylum seeker, what the legalities are and what people's experience of moving to St Helens has been.”

MRANG [Merseyside Refugee and Asylum Seekers Pre and Post Natal Support Group]

An example of the typical heart breaking situation which MRANG has to try and deal with is shown below:

“.....X has recently given birth. She is living on the sofa in the living room of a friend’s house with the baby. She has no access to public funds as she is a failed asylum seeker and struggles to provide the baby with the basic necessities without relying on donations. X is socially isolated because of a lack of funds restricting her travel. This means she has not left the house with the baby to socialise with other mums and receive peer support. Support is given to her in the form of a perinatal support worker and health visitor. However, she is unable to change her current circumstance because of her destitution.....”

Wherever possible SAS now make 10 week grants of £30 per week [plus £7 per child] to help individuals over difficult periods.

Alison Moore, Director at MRANG has reported receiving requests from charitable groups in the newly dispersed areas of St Helens, Halton, and Knowsley etc., who have little experience of dealing with such cases.

In fact ALM, Faiths4Change and the Probation Service are all reporting similar demands for their expertise from charitable groups in these newly dispersed areas.

Probation Service [Merseyside Community Rehabilitation Company]

SAS are receiving more frequent requests from the Probation service for individual emergency support grants for asylum seekers and refugees who are out on licence, and with no access to any funds. SAS provide up to 10 week grants of £30. In many cases the person MUST complete an Unpaid Work requirement. This requires travel costs, and to be able to buy food and drink for the period of the work, which can vary greatly over weeks and months.

SAS has agreed to also fund this travel and food requirement.

One problem facing the probation supervisors is finding suitable commissioned work for asylum seekers and refugees who are out on licence and need to complete their Unpaid Work requirement. If any readers know of any suitable charitable work that a group of such people could perform please let me know. It has to be of a charitable nature e.g. gardening or maintenance at a church or vacant church property which needs clearing out, cleaning, waxing old church pews etc. The probation service provide all the travel to site costs, equipment and tools and have a supervisor permanently working with the group, who are all low level risk.

Support for SAS/ALM

I would take this opportunity again to ask individuals, faith groups and other organisations to continue to support the work of SAS and ALM e.g. donations, fundraising activities, new and old clothes, donating specific food items, etc. You can obtain a full list of food items wanted and fundraising ideas for SAS from the CTMR administration office [sas@ctmr.org.uk or tel: 0151 709 0125] or directly to myself.

Cheques should be made payable to “Churches Together in the Merseyside Region S.A.S” or simply “CTMR SAS”.

We can provide a list of other ideas or suggestions for raising funds and supporting the work of SAS and ALM.

There are only so many ways to say a heartfelt “Thank You” once again for the financial support to SAS from individuals, groups, churches, charitable trusts and organisations over the reported period. Your continued support is greatly appreciated. Please keep in your prayers the staff, volunteers and trustees of ALM and SAS, and our local partner agencies, involved in supporting the growing number of arguably the most marginalised group in our community.

May the peace and blessings of the Holy Family be with you and your family this Christmas time.

Neil Cunningham

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December 2017

Ps If you prefer not to receive SAS newsletters in future please let me know. Neil

Support for Asylum Seekers
CTMR – Churches Together in the Merseyside Region
Registered Charity Number 519061

Statement of Financial Activities
for the 10 months period to 31 October 2017

	10 months Total to October	12 months Total
	2017	2016
Incoming Resources		
Grants from Organisations	50,844	30,937
Individual Donations	7,326	5,731
	58,170	36,667
Resources Expended		
Accommodation	25,722	14,256
Destitution Support	9,704	17,925
Printing Expenses	1,524	0
Probation Grants for Asylum seekers	1,190	2,250
	38,140	34,431
Net Incoming (Outgoing) Resources	20,030	2,236
Fund Balances		
At 31 December 2016	39,079	36,843
At 31 October 2017	59,109	39,079
Represented By :		
Bank Bal @ 31 October 2017	59,109	39,079