

How do you like our new logo?

We are now nine months into the DASH hosting project and are pleased to report that our service is being used regularly. Many thanks to our hosts, volunteers, staff at Clare House, staff at Refugee Council in Huddersfield, Patrice at HAAS, staff at the Womens Centre, Hazel at REACH and other people who have referred to us for their commitment and support.

An update

Last May we reported that we had done 265 nights of hosting with 10 hosts and 24 guests. As of 18 August we have now done **500 nights** of hosting with **10** hosts and **29** guests. Very few people require one night only, and the longest stay so far has been 110 nights. We currently have three long stay guests. We are also supporting six other people who have been able to find accommodation, by assisting them in managing their appointments and giving them emotional support.

Why do people need our help?

When a claim is refused, the asylum seeker is evicted from their accommodation and has no recourse to public funds whatsoever. This means that they are effectively destitute. Many manage to rely on friends for food and shelter, but this often lays a burden on those least able to offer financial support. We also work with refugees, people who have been given leave to stay, but who have a gap between being evicted from the accommodation provided by those catering for asylum seekers and being able to access other accommodation.

Where have people come from?

In the early days, most of our people were from Eritrea, but we have also worked with people from Kuwait, Iran, Zimbabwe, the Gambia, Iraq, Pakistan and Bangladesh. We currently have a long stay guest from Liberia. Some of our guests have been Christian, some Muslim and some of no faith.

The near future:

A contract has been signed with G4S who are becoming the sole provider of services for asylum seekers in this area. This means that there will be substantial changes in the way that those services are delivered, which will impact upon the work of DASH.

In our last newsletter, we reported that the accommodation side of the services had been sub-contracted to United Property Management (upm), but we have now been informed that this will be undertaken by Cascade Homes Ltd, who are a lettings agency based in Leeds.

The transition period began officially on 23 July, and we were expecting that many asylum seekers with current claims would be moved from council accommodation into private properties. Although people making a first claim are not normally assisted by DASH, because we were worried that the standard of these properties might not reach statutory requirements, we collaborated with other asylum seeker organisations in the town and worked with Clare House to provide training sessions which were attended by 15 people, with a view to them monitoring the handover.

However, Cascade have not yet managed to source a significant number of properties in

Huddersfield and our information is that no-one has yet received a letter telling them that they will be moving. The situation remains unclear at the moment, but it seems that Cascade will not be able to fulfill their contractual commitment to move all current claimants by the end of September.

The timetable given by UKBA provides for the service currently operating at Clare House to close at the end of September and despite the fact that it is unlikely Cascade can deliver their part of the contract by then, this is not set to change. After that there will be a call centre provided to replace support workers and deal with any queries from asylum seekers who have not yet had a decision.

DASH is worried that the lack of face to face contact will prove very isolating for asylum seekers and particularly so for those facing destitution. Other organisations working in the town will continue – 611, REACH, Womens Centre, HAAS, Town of Sanctuary and the new Pathways to Integration project, based at the Citizens Advice Bureau – but there will be no service which aims to provide for those who have been refused. Clare House currently acts as a point of contact for these people and has a post-decision worker.

With this in mind, DASH is working in partnership with **Huddersfield Samaritans** and, in line with the results of our survey which 71 of you kindly completed, will be opening a new drop-in centre called **TOMORROW** at 14 New North Parade Huddersfield HD1 5JP at 10am on Tuesday 18 September. Do join us to celebrate. The drop-in, which will operate on Tuesdays from 10-3, will be primarily for refused asylum seekers and offer signposting services and support, as well as advocacy. We aim to be a place of welcome and rest. Other services which are currently provided at Clare House may transfer and be offered at **TOMORROW** when Clare House closes at the end of September, and this is under negotiation. New volunteers are always welcome, and for those of you who feel unable to host, this would be a good time to get involved.

Funding:

We have received a small amount of funding from the Allen Lane Foundation, which will enable us to continue for the next few months and we hope that receiving a grant from such a prestigious organisation will be the springboard for attracting more funding in future. We have also received a small grant from Kirklees Asylum Seekers Support, for expenses and other personal donations. DASH is very grateful for this support.

Thanks:

DASH would like to thank Robert Young for his untiring administrative support, and to Brian Artingstall for his professional assistance with the survey.

A huge thank you to all our supporters. You are providing people who are destitute with a safe, warm, dry place to stay, and something to eat. You are their lifeline. You. Thank you. All of you.

Please note our new telephone number, although it is still possible to reach us on the old one.

DASH 01484 937999 email: info@huddsdash.org.uk web: www.huddsdash.org.uk 25.8.12