

Hi everyone and welcome to DASH's latest newsletter

As you may know, we have moved to 30 New North Road HD1 5JY, which is owned by St Patrick's Church. Everyone comments on what a light airy space it is and on the welcoming atmosphere. We usually have a queue by 12.30 and generally the reception room is full. It is not uncommon to see more than twenty people for advocacy and support, and there are usually people who just come in for a chat and a slice of pizza or cake.

Many thanks to St Patrick's Church for their support.

CAKE

We have had quite a few cakes recently. When someone is given leave to remain, or is granted support where that was previously not in place (or was threatened with withdrawal but successfully challenged), we always celebrate with cake and candles. So far this year 13 DASH clients have been given leave to remain. Others have been refused, but we are still helping them to work on their cases and are confident that they will get permission to remain in the end.

ZACHARY

Zachary, who came over with his country's Olympic team in 2012, was refused and recently detained. However, with a huge amount of support from the solicitors' firm McGlashen McKay, the Unity Centre in Glasgow and Leeds and Beacon in Bradford, his flight was cancelled at the last minute and the following day he was released. Now he is working on an appeal to be granted leave to remain.

WELL DONE EVERYONE!!

QUALIFICATIONS

Recently three DASH clients took and passed a Level 2 Food Safety Course, so we can now be certain that our pizza is 100% guaranteed (only joking!). Other clients have successfully taken exams in maths and English, and one client was elected class representative for his ESOL class at college.

HOSTING

Not a huge amount of hosting has taken place so far this year. We think this is because the initial accommodation centre is now in Wakefield (although we do take referrals from them) and because we have managed to move on the cases of people who, when we first set up, had been in the system for a long time. By 'move on', we mean that they have cases in progress now, which means they qualify for support, or that they have been given leave to remain.

VOLUNTEERS

We have had an influx of new volunteers, in ESOL, office administration and in general support at the drop in, which is great. Well done Elaine for fielding them all. Substantial volunteer training is due to start in earnest very shortly, thanks to two grants recently received. Many thanks to our regular volunteers including those who never come to the drop in but offer help such as IT support, transport and befriending.

FUNDING

You may already know we have had £10k in funding from Kirklees Council, and £10k from Awards for All. This year we have also received £600 from One17Design, £2k from Lush and £1300 from Comic Relief. This enables us to run efficiently with two part time paid staff – Natja and Elaine – and to cover items such as client travel, IT costs and volunteer expenses. DASH has grown at a phenomenal rate, with a budget of £5k in our first year, £12k in our second year and over £25k this year. Given the current financial climate, this is nothing short of amazing. Many thanks to all those who donate on a regular basis and who send one offs to us now and then. An example of this is V. who raised £155 at a cake sale at her church for us, and P. who donated compensation he received to us. But it's not only money. We also have fantastic in kind support including clothes knitted for a new baby, items such as a microwave and carpet supplied by the St Vincent de Paul society and clothes and household items from the Salvation Army.

REFERRALS

We are grateful to the Welcome Centre and the charity Christian African Relief Fund for accepting referrals for DASH clients to receive food and clothing.

So, on the whole, things are running fairly smoothly, thanks to a lot of volunteer support and our amazing staff (who I'm sure do far more hours than they are contracted for), and to all our supporters. THANK YOU.

Together we are keeping around 100 asylum seekers and new refugees in Huddersfield safe and supported, and that is nothing short of brilliant.

It's all good news. Nobody has been deported to their home country, the people who have been refused we are still working with, and there is a tremendous sense of hope for the future.