

Voluntary Action Leeds

for the Third Sector in Leeds

Voluntary Action Leeds is the Lord Mayor's Charity Appeal 2011-12



Refugees & Asylum Seekers

This VAL service is part-funded by Leeds City Council through the Infrastructure Support Fund





VAL staff and trustees with the Lord Mayor of Leeds

Welcome

It's a real pleasure for us both to be writing the editorial for this *Refugees and Asylum Seekers* issue of the VAL newsletter - the first to be produced since Voice and VAL merged on 1 October. Merger was not an easy option for either organisation, and the Trustees and staff of the new organisation deserve great credit for not only bringing it off, but doing so on schedule.



"The benefits of merger are already becoming evident - easier access to a wider and better integrated range of support and development services."

The benefits of merger are already becoming evident - easier access to a wider and better integrated range of support and development services. Those that provide services to and champion the needs of refugees and asylum seekers in the city, featured in this newsletter, are a case in point. Ultimately that is what must guide our development in the changes and challenges we face - what is good for the sector, yes, but what is best for the communities we serve.

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VAL News

VAL's New Look!

Welcome to the first newsletter since the merger between VAL and Leeds Voice. VAL now has a new logo and a new green colour scheme. This larger 16 page edition includes all of Leeds Voice's project, network and forum information.

Our website has also been updated to reflect the merger. Visit www.val.org.uk to find out more.

Getting Involved: A conference for the Third Sector

Our conference for the Third Sector on Giving, Volunteering and Participation will take place on Wednesday 7 December at Leeds Civic Hall.

Organised in partnership by VAL, Third Sector Leeds, The European Year of Volunteering 2011 and Leeds City Council Library and Information Service and supported by Europe Direct Leeds.

For more information visit www.val.org.uk or call Richard Whitmill on 0113 297 7920.



Fundraising for The Lord Mayor's Charity Appeal

Thank you to everyone who's made a donation to the Lord Mayor's Appeal this year. Events coming up include:

16 December - German Market Fundraiser - 5.15pm-

6.30pm. VAL volunteers will be out in force with the Lord Mayor for an hour of German Market fundraising fun in Millennium Square.

22 December - Hunslet Morrisons Bag Packing - 22 December - 9am-4pm. Featuring the Lord Mayor packing bags at 10am! All volunteers

welcome to take a turn bag packing.
 If you'd like to help with the fundraising for the Lord Mayor's Appeal visit our Donate page to find out more.
www.val.org.uk/page/donate

Training Matters

Our Winter training programme is now available, visit the website for full details of all our training.
www.val.org.uk/courses.php

Latest Updates

For the latest VAL updates follow us on facebook at www.facebook.com/voluntaryactionleeds and on twitter @richard_at_val



Update

Government asylum and refugee policy

Pip Tyler, Policy and Research Manager at Migration Yorkshire explains how policy



developments are affecting asylum seekers and refugees in Leeds.

**Who are the refugees and asylum seekers in Leeds?**

People who have fled their country in search of safety and freedom can apply for international protection under the criteria of the 1951 Refugee Convention. In the UK, these asylum seekers are supported by the Home Office until they are given a decision on their claim, and Leeds hosts a small number of these.

At the moment, just under 300 asylum seekers from a range of countries who are awaiting an initial decision from the Home Office live in Leeds (at June 2011). Many others who have received refugee status are now settled in the city, while times are harder for those who have been unsuccessful, with a range of organisations offering basic support to those who feel unable to return home.

"Migrants will continue to arrive in Leeds for all sorts of reasons, but policy developments increasingly mean that the successful integration of newcomers is largely in the hands of local communities."

What is the Coalition government doing about migration?

The Coalition partners in government have quite opposing perspectives on migration, with Conservatives keen to respond to public concerns about immigration levels while the Liberal Democrats have taken a strong line to end the detention of children prior to their deportation. The Prime Minister has focused on 'net migration' - the balance between immigration and emigration. The target is to reduce the net number of new arrivals planning to stay in the UK for at least a year to the tens of thousands (it currently stands well above 200,000).

Since the election, government has revisited legal entry routes to the UK for all different types of migrant. Policy debates have covered migrant workers, international students, people visiting or joining their family in the UK. Government has examined alternative ways of returning refused asylum seeking families back to their country of origin without using existing detention facilities.

How are the new policies affecting Leeds?

Some colleges will no longer be able to sponsor international students, and employers may be looking to recruit migrant workers from the EU because of new quotas on visas for migrant workers from outside the EU. If you have family abroad, it is likely to become more difficult to bring them over for a visit or to settle more permanently. In terms of asylum, several families who were staying in Yorkshire and the Humber have now gone home under a new family returns process.

While some asylum seekers return, others make a new life for themselves here. Asylum seekers and refugees in Leeds receive important support from a range of organisations, but crucially, newcomers themselves have of course contributed to the city in a multitude of ways. For example, many asylum seekers take on volunteering roles while they are waiting for their asylum claim to be decided while a recent Jamie's Great Britain programme described the influence of food from Jewish, Persian and Chinese immigrants in Leeds.

Government seems focused on controlling entry rather than facilitating integration of newcomers, and in the economic context, services supporting migrants have found themselves under pressure. Like other cities, Leeds recently lost both its Immigration Advisory Service and Refugee Integration and Employment Service.

Migrants will continue to arrive in Leeds for all sorts of reasons, but policy developments increasingly mean that the successful integration of newcomers is largely in the hands of local communities. A great example of local action is the movement pressing for Leeds to become a City of Sanctuary - a collaborative move to welcome asylum seekers and refugees to our city.

Migration Yorkshire is the Yorkshire and Humber regional migration partnership and is hosted by Leeds City Council. Migration Yorkshire works with national, regional and local partners to ensure that the region can deal with, and benefit from, migration.

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www.migrationyorkshire.org.uk

Ask Kathy

Advice and Guidance from Kathy Faulks, VAL's Small Groups Development Worker



What can an asylum seeker do?

Quite a lot actually in the voluntary sector! First of all, people who have refugee status or who have exceptional leave to remain, (and their family members) are allowed to volunteer. Also, asylum seekers are allowed to volunteer with registered charities, voluntary organisations and bodies that raise funds for either.

Anyone who is aged 16 or over for a charitable company and 18 or over for an unincorporated charity who wishes to act as a trustee should generally be free to do so. Other requirements for acting as a trustee include the following:

- Capable of managing and administering own affairs.
- No unspent conviction relating to any offence involving deception or dishonesty.
- Not an undischarged bankrupt.
- Not subject to a disqualification order under the Company Directors Disqualification Act 1986 or to an Order made under section 429(b) of the Insolvency Act 1986.

- Not been removed from the office of charity trustee for a charity by an order made by the Charity Commissioners or the High Court on the grounds of any misconduct or mismanagement.

So, taking all the above into consideration an asylum seeker can be a trustee of a registered charity! However, the Charity Commission points out that *"Where the individual is an asylum seeker the trustees should ensure that the individual has discussed their appointment with their Home Office case owner."*

Asylum seekers can be provided with meals (or reimbursement for meals) while volunteering, and can be reimbursed for actual travel costs and normal volunteer expenses. All reimbursements must be properly documented.

One last point about trustee boards: Asylum seekers should not constitute more than 50% of the board. At least 50% of a board of trustees must be officially resident in the UK - this can include UK citizens and refugees.

Rural Leads

Asset, liability or just a damp squib?

A community asset might be: a building; land; financial assets; legacy assets; community business assets; intellectual assets or human assets.

Now imagine that a local authority is negotiating the transfer of a building that is used as a library. If only the building is being transferred to a Third Sector

"If a Third Sector organisation is not careful they could end up with an incomplete asset transfer!"

organisation then what happens about the other assets involved in managing a library? Obvious examples are:

- Future acquisition of library stock
- Future professional librarian support
- Software to run systems and maintain library membership lists
- Income from the local authority
- Sharing of backroom and specialist services
- If a Third Sector organisation is not careful they could end up with an incomplete asset transfer! Yes, they might get a building but if that is all that is on offer then the Third Sector organisation needs to do a lot more negotiation to make sure that they are taking on an asset not a liability!
- Any Third Sector organisation involved



in community asset transfer should be taking independent advice from an organisation such as the National Federation of Community Organisations, better known as Community Matters. Also, an organisation may need the support of other professionals such as solicitors, architects and surveyors.

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Spotlight on the Funder

The Henry Smith Charity

Leeds Community Foundation (LCF) is currently working in association with the Henry Smith Charity. Grants for up to three years are available for a wide range of work in health and social welfare. The charity has two funding programmes relevant to organisations in Yorkshire:

1. The Small Grants programme, offering one-off grants of up to £10,000 for organisations with an annual income of less than £150,000, is only open to registered charities.
2. The General List programme is open to all voluntary and community groups, whether registered charities or not, and looks to fund specific budget items such as salaries. Grants can also be for core costs.

Grants are available in the following categories:

- Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME)
- Carers
- Community Service
- Disability
- Domestic and Sexual Violence
- Drugs, Alcohol and Substance Misuse
- Ex-Service Men and Women
- Family Services

- Healthcare
- Homelessness
- Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender
- Mental Health
- Older People
- Prisoners and Ex-offenders
- Prostitution and Trafficking
- Refugees and Asylum Seekers
- Young People

Please note applications are not made through LCF but directly through the Henry Smith Charity who then liaise with LCF.



www.henrysmithcharity.org.uk

Groups are welcome to discuss a potential application with LCF in advance - call 0113 242 2426

Funding News

Online Fundraising

Leeds Community Foundation has a new opportunity to enable all voluntary and community groups to take advantage of online fundraising. localgiving.com provides groups an easy to update webpage, tools to manage donations, manage Gift Aid - even if the group is not registered with the Charity Commission - and provides advice on fundraising.

Visit www.localgiving.com, email info@leedscommunity-foundation.org.uk or call 0113 242 2426.

VAL E-News
To receive our free E-News bulletin visit www.val.org.uk

Lottery offers extra £50m

The Big Lottery Fund has announced that it is to award an extra £50m to voluntary organisations in the current financial year. The BLF is increasing the annual budgets for its Reaching Communities and Awards for All programmes by £12m and £5m respectively. It will also provide more than 900 grants of up to £10,000 to existing grant holders before the end of the current financial year. More at www.biglotteryfund.org.uk

The Strategic Legal Fund

The Strategic Legal Fund for Refugee Children and Young People (SLF) supports strategic legal work, work which goes beyond securing justice for an individual to make a significant contribution to law, practice and procedures that uphold and promote the rights of refugee and asylum seeking children and young people (up to the age of 21). The SLF is time limited and will run from October 2011 to July 2012. It will distribute up to £300,000. Visit www.migrationwork.org.uk.

For more funding information visit the Funding Support section of our website www.val.org.uk



Supplied by Kathryn Fitzsimons, Chair of Third Sector Leeds, an alliance of voluntary and community organisations, charities, faith groups, and social enterprises working in Leeds.

I have been the Chair of Third Sector Leeds since January 2010, when its Leadership group first started meeting. I'm pleased to be able to report that since then we have made real progress in getting greater influence for the sector. It's not good enough just to have a seat at the table, we need to use the representation we have effectively, and that is exactly what we are doing.

New Partnerships

Third Sector Leeds is unusual in having places on the Leeds Initiative's main Board and all five of the thematic partnerships that now make up the Structure - the Children's Trust; Health and Well Being; Safer and Stronger; Sustainable Economy & Culture; and Housing and Regeneration. TSL also sits on all three Area Leadership Teams for South East, North West and East North East Leeds. There are some new faces as well as some more familiar ones. Soon they will be meeting to work out how to maximise the sector's influence.

Public Sector Budgets

Third Sector Leeds is already in dialogue with the Council about the impact of next year's budgets on the sector. At our request, Alan Gay, the Council's Director of Resources, presented a paper to the last meeting of the Third Sector Partnership Group updating us on this year's cuts, and giving us advance information about what the position is likely to be next year. He told us that government grant to Leeds will be reduced by a further £27 million, and

with other pressures cuts are likely to be in the order of £50 million, compared to £90 million last year. TSL has asked for further discussion about this in advance of decisions, and for more information about how the equality impact assessment on the budget will be carried out. TSL is arguing for the "Hardship Fund" made available last year to be repeated.

Localism

TSL has organised two events for middle and senior managers in the sector - and the last one held in late October was briefed on Leeds' response to the Localism Bill. A briefing paper was prepared especially for the event. Neighbourhood Plans are being piloted in Otley, Boston Spa, Kippax and Holbeck. Participants concluded that Third Sector Leeds should develop a position statement on localism, and raise awareness in the sector about what it means for Leeds.

And finally...

TSL has brokered two meetings between leaders from the Leeds Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BME) Third Sector and the Council's Chief Executive Tom Riordan. The second meeting which took place last month focussed on the levels of achievement of BME students, and included Nigel Richardson, Director of Children's Services. It's a good example of how TSL is making sure the sector punches its weight in the city, especially when it is making sure all the voices of our diverse city are heard loud and clear.

In Brief

TSL Cuts Survey

TSL is carrying out a survey of the impact of cuts in Leeds. We want as many Third Sector organisations as possible to complete it as it's really important for us to get a full picture of the impact of cuts, not only to help assess the state of the sector but for our budget discussion with statutory partners. The survey is very simple and will take you only a few minutes to complete.

The survey is available at www.val.org.uk.

Evaluation

As TSL reaches the end of our second year of operation we would love to hear your thoughts on how we are doing. We will be doing an evaluation in the New Year. If you want to contribute please get in touch - details at the bottom of the page.

Leadership Group

The leadership group of TSL meets eight times a year and discusses issues that affect the whole sector.

If you'd like to suggest an item for

discussion or want to find out more please contact us.

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Supporting Links to Commissioning

Supporting Links to Commissioning helps Third Sector organisations with commissioning and procurement.

In partnership with Leeds City Council, Leeds Voice set up the Supporting Links to Commissioning Project in 2008.

Last year NHS began supporting the project too. Now, following the merger it is part of Voluntary Action Leeds. The project aims to sustain and develop the contribution of our sector in areas like adult social care and children's services. But we are also interested in looking at areas of work not usually associated with our sector and to respond as well as we can to the opening of public services.

Working with groups old and new, large and small, we have been:

- Working with commissioners to influence their understanding of need at the local level; what the input of our sector is; and how they can approach the design and delivery of procurement to ensure inclusion of the skills of Third Sector groups;
- Working with Third Sector groups to raise understanding of commissioning and of the procurement process, and helping to build consortium groupings across geographical areas and themes.

- Developing information accessible via our website.

The project can also feed in local knowledge and the experiences of people on the ground. With your help we can influence commissioners' understanding of need - critically important in relation to refugees and asylum seekers in particular. Plus, while smaller groups often have the best connections on the ground they struggle to command the interest of commissioners. Working together through a consortium approach can turn this around and offer the best of both worlds. We are actively engaged with several consortiums and would be happy to talk with you about any ideas you may have in your service area or part of Leeds. We are particularly keen to hear from groups involved in delivering support to refugees and asylum seekers.

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Young Lives Leeds

Young Lives Leeds works with children, young people and families in the Children's Services sector in Leeds.

Young Lives Leeds has contact with over 500 Third Sector organisations (the Young Lives Leeds Network) that predominately offer services for children, young people and their families in Leeds.

Young Lives Leeds supports the sector to improve the lives of children, young people and families in Leeds, by giving organisations the voice, information and advice they need to build better services.

The Co-ordinator (Jeannette Morris-Boam) and Development Worker (Gary Blake) facilitate regular forum and subgroup meetings, and one off events. These provide opportunities for Third Sector organisations to engage in discussions and consultations that

contribute to the shaping of Children's

Services. Young Lives Leeds also provides Children's Services information to its members.

The Capacity Build Workers (Harriet Wright - Young People's groups and Kirsty McKay - Children's groups) support organisations with their planning, governance issues, finding and applying for funding, quality assurance, collaboration, monitoring and evaluation, and development of policies and procedures.

"Young Lives Leeds supports the sector to improve the lives of children, young people and families in Leeds, by giving organisations the voice, information and advice they need to build better services."

Jeannette Morris-Boam

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Young Lives Leeds is a partnership project between re'new and Voluntary Action Leeds





Positive Action for Refugees and Asylum Seekers (PAFRAS)

Jane Robinson talks to Laurie Ray, Case Worker and Information Officer at Positive Action for Refugees and Asylum Seekers

Can you tell me about the history of PAFRAS?

PAFRAS works with asylum seekers, refugees and local communities in Leeds and the surrounding area.

PAFRAS was established in 2003 by Christine Majid as Positive Action for Refugees. The project focussed on welcoming and helping integrate the refugees and asylum seekers in Leeds.

In 2005 there was a shift in government policy which led

country of origin and not necessarily willing or able to return yourself. The shift in government policy led to a shift in focus at PAFRAS to destitution and the appointment of PAFRAS's first paid Case Worker.

What does PAFRAS do?

PAFRAS is the main project in Leeds providing direct support to destitute asylum seekers. We run a twice-weekly drop-in service to which we currently receive an

the reception desk to preparing food in the kitchen.

Our Thursday session includes advice from our Case Workers who advocate for clients to support their access to mainstream services such as health and social care, support in accessing legal representation and signpost and refer to other specialist services.

To October this year we provided an average of 550 meals to the 680 visitors attending the drop-in service each month. So far this year we have seen an 18 per cent increase in the number of service user visits compared to 2010.

"PAFRAS was established in 2003 by Christine Majid as Positive Action for Refugees. The project focussed on welcoming and helping integrate the refugees and asylum seekers in Leeds."

to a significant amount of destitution amongst people who'd been refused asylum. When you're refused asylum your right to claim any support from the State is terminated but you're not necessarily returned to your

average of 680 visits each month. All those who attend our drop-in are provided with a meal, snacks and fresh fruit as well as hot and cold drinks prepared by our volunteers. We distribute food parcels put together out of the donations of foodstuffs we receive.

When are your drop-ins held?

Our Drop-ins are held at St Aidan's Community Hall which is behind St Aidan's Church on Roundhay Road on a Tuesday and Thursday. Our aim has been to create a place where service users can feel at ease and that they can take ownership. Service users are encouraged to get involved with the running of the drop-in, from manning

Where are the refugees and asylum seekers from?

There's a slowly shifting population. We mostly see men, the vast majority are between the ages of 20 and 35. This age group is the most able to travel and many of the countries they come from have very young populations.

For the last couple of years the highest number of refugees and asylum seekers we see are from Iran and Eritrea, followed by Zimbabwe, Iraq and Ethiopia. Government policy plays a large part in this. Since the early 2000s, the Government has dispersed asylum seekers out of London to the regions, consistently dispersing different nationalities to different areas. In part I suppose this has built communities so now we have a big Eritrean community in Leeds and people come here to

organisation profile

Positive Action For Refugees and Asylum Seekers (PAFRAS)

Positive Action for Refugees and Asylum Seekers works to reduce the impact of destitution and poverty in Leeds and the surrounding area.

Call: 0113 262 2163

Email: info@pafaras.org.uk

Web: www.pafaras.org.uk



access support from this community if they've been refused asylum somewhere else in the country.

We mainly see people whose right to remain in this country has been refused. Everyone who claims asylum is given Temporary Admission. As an asylum seeker you receive the basic rate of Income Support. If your request for asylum is refused this payment is terminated 28 days later and you are not entitled to anything, with the exception of those with children.

How do people survive?

About 27 per cent of appeals are upheld. If your appeal isn't upheld then people rely largely on the support of their friends and the local community, charitable organisations, churches and mosques. A very small number will take up illegal working, being paid very poorly in unsafe conditions. The Home Office do not necessarily remove you from the country.

It's really difficult to understand how people survive for a number of years - pulling different threads together basically.

People's initial asylum claims are frequently not handled well. There will have been problems with accessing evidence and interpretation. It is possible to put a new application in writing to the Home Office with new evidence and information. The Home Office decides whether this qualifies as a new application or not. If the Home Office decides it doesn't qualify there's no possibility of appeal and the bar for accessing Legal Aid for Judicial Review is very high.

What health problems do you encounter among refugees and asylum seekers?

Mental health is a really big problem for many of our service users. People have frequently experienced significant trauma in their country of origin, the effects of which are compounded by refusal of protection, social isolation and destitution in the UK.

PAFRAS has a mental health worker who assesses clients', conducts emergency counselling and runs group sessions for service users as well as ensuring that they are able to access mainstream services.

If their request for asylum

"Mental health is a really big problem for many of our service users. People have frequently experienced significant trauma in their country of origin, the effects of which are compounded by refusal of protection, social isolation and destitution in the UK."

fails they can't work, they have no rights to benefits, no rights to housing, no real rights to access social care. They can access primary health care at the discretion of GPs and in Leeds the PCT runs York Street Health Practice to offer healthcare for the vulnerably transient and homeless people in Leeds. They have no free access to secondary health care.

What do you enjoy most about your role?

For me, the case work is fantastic. It's very hard work but it's also very rewarding. It's the challenge of helping people to turn things around.

Like a gas, casework expands to fill all available space. Dividing my time equally between my information officer role and my case worker one is always



challenging.

How is PAFRAS funded?

Our funding comes from a variety of trusts. We also rely on the generosity of those many individuals, groups and organisations who

give so generously to us, donating food, toiletries and money. More resources are always needed so please contact us if you think you could help.

How do you use volunteers?

We use around 15 volunteers at the moment. Our volunteers have many roles. Some are involved in making up the food parcels, working at the drop-ins, befriending, interpreting, screening service users before they see case workers, providing office support, becoming involved as a trustee and carrying out research. All our research and briefing papers are on our website.

Please get in touch with PAFRAS if you'd like to know more about volunteering or if you can help with providing resources.

Leeds BME Network

Leeds BME Network exists to develop and strengthen BME Third Sector groups focusing on enabling and promoting BME representation at all levels in the city.



David Odunukwe from Leeds BME Network talks to Chris Brooks from Refugee Training Education and Advice Service (RETAS)

What does RETAS do? We provide education through the provision of training to refugees and asylum seekers. All clients are assessed by one of our advisers as to their need for help in seeking employment; those professionally qualified are signposted to more specific provision, for example, a refugee doctor group. We continue to offer the International English Language Testing System qualification - higher level English proficiency for professionals. We're known for our welcoming environment, we are family focussed, for example, running trips out of Leeds. We are involved in awareness raising with schools, colleges and businesses.



Where would you like RETAS to be in a year? We'd like to have a more established online presence, and to have consolidated our position as a resource centre for ESOL in Leeds. We are currently developing a partnership project with Leeds BME Network, Advocacy Support and Leeds City Council's Adult Services.

Do you have a wish list? Yes, that refugees were better integrated at all levels of working life, on trustee boards, being promoted in organisations, having a greater voice and working to their fullest capacities.

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Physical and Sensory Impairment Network (Leeds)

Working together to share information, to improve communication and to represent the interests and concerns of disabled people in Leeds.



Where does the time go? I cannot believe that it's a year since I took over from Linda Boadle as Development Worker. In that time new organisations have joined the Network but we are always looking to increase the numbers and ensure that information reaches as many people as possible.

Our objectives are:

- To promote the social model of disability, and the inclusion, independence and equality of disabled people within service provision. In particular to increase the involvement of disabled people in organisations and management of those organisations that serve



- them.
 - To develop a network of Third Sector groups of disabled people with physical and sensory impairments, and of groups /organisations providing services for disabled people.
 - To co-ordinate Third Sector involvement in physical and sensory impairment issues throughout Leeds.
 - To provide and disseminate relevant information to groups of disabled people.
- On 31 October I attended a Health and Well-Being event in Yeadon organised by DREAM (Disability, Recreation, Education & Advisory Meetings) It was an opportunity to meet members of the group

- and for them to access information about the PSINetwork.
- The highlight of the afternoon was the music session, there was the noise from tambourines, chime bars and people singing sea shanties! Free hand massages and blood pressure checks were also available.
- DREAM provides a range of activities and social outings. Brenda Taylor is the founder and Chair of DREAM who together with a team of dedicated members makes things happen. Visit www.dreamnwleeds.btck.co.uk

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Leeds Environment Forum

Exists to represent and empower its members at a strategic level whilst building capacity and celebrating the success of its members.

Leeds Environment Forum holds four strategic meetings each year. Each meeting examines a particular theme that affects Third Sector groups working on environmental issues. Opinions and views from Leeds Environment Forum then feed to Leeds City Council.

Environment Forum members choose to attend meetings most relevant to them. In 2012 the four themes are:

- Climate Change in Leeds
- Parks and greenspaces
- Sustainable suburbs
- Green infrastructure.

The first of these meetings will be on Wednesday 8 February at 4pm. If you would like to come along please get in touch.

Spotlight on the Leeds Economic Growth Strategy.

Leeds City Council's Economic

Growth Strategy has recently been to its Executive Board and it is good to see that there are sections specifically developing low carbon manufacturing, social enterprise and the Third Sector.

Leeds Economic Growth Strategy is a really important piece of work that will guide the Council's direction. It is heartening to see priorities of the Environment Forum highlighted. For more information visit www.val.org.uk

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Third Sector Health and Well-Being Network

Facilitates and supports the involvement of the Third Sector in decision making processes and delivery of services across Leeds.

The Third Sector Health and Well-Being Network has a membership of 110 Third Sector organisations with a health and well-being related remit within Leeds. It is governed by a steering group which is made up of key selected organisations. The steering group is responsible for the strategic direction of the network. The Network:

- Provides information updates to members
- Organises, delivers and facilitates events
- Liaises with strategic public sector partners
- Provides the point of contact for Third Sector responses to strategic developments, consultations and initiatives locally, regionally and nationally
- Links into strategic decision making through health and well being partnerships/structures via representatives who report back to the network.
- Works in collaboration with the other forums: Volition, Leeds Older People's Forum, Tenfold and PSINetwork.
- Acts as the interface between the statutory partners and the Third Sector in relation to health and well-being.

Themed network meetings are open to any group working in health and well-being within Leeds. Networks meetings for 2012 are as follows:-

- Wednesday 18 January
- Wednesday 18 April
- Wednesday 5 September
- Wednesday 12 December

If you'd like to find out more please get in touch.

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Supplied by Chris Billington at Wrigleys Solicitors LLP. Chris is Chair of the VAL Trustee Board and advises on all matters of governance, contracts and employment.

Asylum is a very emotive issue; legally it is complex; but all too often it is shrouded in myths, half truths and simple scare stories.

For employers the issues are relatively clear. Since 2008 employers can face fines of up to £10,000 (per person) and imprisonment for employing anyone who does not have the right to work in the UK.

Asylum seekers (those leaving their homeland seeking protection from persecution and applying for

refugee status) will be issued with an Asylum Registration Card which will confirm if they are

entitled to work. Without it, they have no right to work.

Refugees include those who have been granted asylum (usually with five years leave to remain), humanitarian protection (five years leave) and those who have been granted discretionary leave to remain (three years). Refugees have no restrictions on the right to work and will be protected under discrimination legislation now enshrined in the Equality Act 2010.

A refugee must reapply for further leave to remain

before their leave period expires. During such application their right to work continues. If their leave has expired with no pending application, or further leave is refused then the right to work is lost; continued employment will carry a risk of a fine and imprisonment.

Economic migrants are something different again, those who come to the UK looking for work. Economic migrants from the European Economic Area will have the right to work, those from outside will need to have a work visa or permit under the immigration

"Asylum seekers (those leaving their homeland seeking protection from persecution and applying for refugee status) will be issued with an Asylum Registration Card which will confirm if they are entitled to work. Without it, they have no right to work."

sponsorship and points systems. Employers should ask all job applicants to demonstrate that they have the right to work and

carry out annual checks on those employees with limited leave to remain to ensure they remain entitled to work. Asking only refugees or foreign looking applicants or staff for evidence will leave you open to claims of discrimination. Essential guidance in this area, and the evidence you should check, is available from the UK Border Authority -

www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk

WRIGLEYS
— SOLICITORS —

In Brief

Public benefit requirement for independent charitable schools

The Upper Tribunal (Tax and Chancery Chamber) published its decision on 14 October 2011 regarding the public benefit requirement for charitable independent schools following a Judicial Review. This decision consequently affects the Charity Commission's guidance on public benefit as it relates to educational charities. More at www.charitycommission.gov.uk

Successful asset transfer in West Yorkshire

The asset transfer of ownership and management of Hebden Bridge town hall from Calderdale council to the specially formed charitable trust Hebden Bridge Community Association is the subject of a useful booklet at www.hebdenbridgetownhall.org.uk

Health and Safety

The Health & Safety Executive's infoline at 0845 345 0055 has closed; information must now be accessed via www.hse.gov.uk

The reporting of accidents under RIDDOR (the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 1995) is now also predominantly online via this website.

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0113 244 6100 • www.wrigleys.co.uk



A series focusing on people working in Third Sector organisations in Leeds.

Leeds Refugee Forum

Rachel Pilling, Leeds Refugee Forum Development Coordinator, tells us about herself and her job.

Give a brief outline of your experience and career path. After completing a fashion and textiles degree I've had a variety of jobs mostly in the not for profit sector in West Yorkshire working with volunteers and communities. The common theme through them all which continues to inspire me is using my working life to make a positive change or difference to someone's life.

Which areas/client group does your organisation support? Leeds Refugee Forum (LRF) is a refugee led organisation based in Lincoln Green. It identifies, inspires, develops, encourages and supports members of the refugee community in Leeds. It provides a collective voice highlighting and advocating for the needs and aspirations of refugee and asylum seeking communities, to influence decisions at strategic level.

How does your organisation make a difference?

LRF helps refugee community organisations (RCOs) and their members meet together and deliver their work. One RCO says "Without LRF, it would be very hard for us to support each other. We use LRF's facilities to support the integration process for our community and encourage a culture of tolerance within society." LRF has helped many people learn and practice English, get training that has led onto employment, or get information about people and services in Leeds that can help them, amongst many other activities.

In three words how would you describe yourself? Tenacious, committed, supportive.

If you had a superpower what would it be and why? To teleport myself (in the style of Captain Kirk and Mr Spock!) so I could get to different places in the blink of an eye!

Leeds Refugee Forum • www.leedsrefugeeforum.org.uk • 0113 244 9600 • info@leedsrefugeeforum.org.uk



Solace

Andrew Hawkins, Solace Manager, tells us about himself and his job.

Give a brief outline of your experience and career path. I started working as a computer operator, then university in Bradford, followed by working in Paris for a few years, teaching English in multinational companies. Another degree in Bradford, followed by several years working at Bradford University in a number of roles - running the Adult Education department for a while, a bit of lecturing. I then set up a community television company in Barnsley, then a freelance film producer, which was followed by setting up Solace five years ago which I'm still doing.

Which areas/client group does your organisation support? Solace provides counselling, complementary therapies and advocacy support to asylum seekers and refugees - mostly in Leeds. We are the only specialist organisation of its type in the region.

How does your organisation make a difference? Solace works with some seriously traumatised people who have survived some of the most extreme experiences any human being could go through and still be alive. Unsurprisingly, many of the people we work with are suicidal. Solace is literally a lifesaver for many of them. We know that because they tell us again and again.

In three words how would you describe yourself? Sociable, enthusiastic, inquisitive.

If you had a superpower what would it be and why? A beam-me-up-Scotty machine so I could have a lunch break on a Mediterranean beach or a night out in Australia. I know this is naughty, but I would also use it to send people who annoy me to places they don't want to go to and they would have to find their own way home at their own expense!

Solace • www.solace-uk.org.uk • 0113 249 1437 • infosolace-uk.org.uk





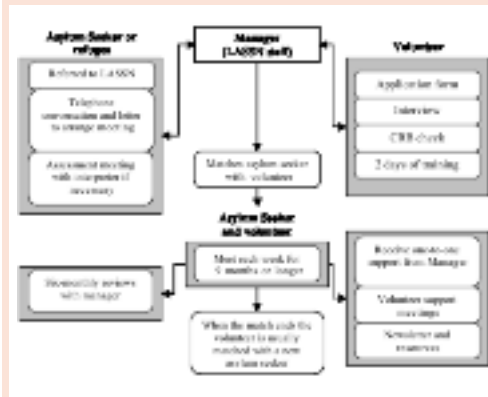
Who can volunteer?

Natasha Mort
Volunteering Development Manager



Leeds Asylum Seekers' Support Network

Last year we supported over 700 refugees and asylum seekers. We couldn't have done it without our 230 volunteers. But volunteering needs organising. Here's how it works in our Befriending and our English-at-Home projects:



We're looking for enthusiasm and empathy not expertise and the application process helps us match each volunteer with the right opportunity.

There are plenty of opportunities to volunteer. For example, our Short Stop project involves welcoming destitute asylum seekers into your own home for one or two nights and Leeds City of Sanctuary opportunities range from gardening to typing. Visit www.cityofsanctuary.org/leeds

We benefit hugely from the expertise refugees and asylum seekers bring, for example as journalists, interpreters, and computer experts. Refugees have permission to remain in the UK but struggle to find work without UK experience. Volunteering can help.

Leeds Asylum Seekers' Support Network

www.lassn.org.uk
0113 373 1759
info@lassn.org.uk

- For many refugees and asylum seekers arriving in Britain, the new country, can be a lonely and frightening place. Asylum seekers, as they are not allowed to work for the first 12 months of their application, are forced to rely on state support, which is set at 30 per cent below the normal level of Income Support.
- Volunteering can be a great way for asylum seekers to improve their English, gain experience of working practices in this country, get to know and integrate into their local communities and meet others.

Anyone who is a European Citizen from EU member states pre 2005 and from the EEA can volunteer within the UK but can refugees and asylum seekers?

People who have refugee status or who have exceptional leave to remain, and their family members, are allowed to volunteer.

Asylum seekers are allowed to volunteer with:

- Registered charities
- Voluntary organisations
- Bodies that raise funds for either

Please note that a failed asylum seeker, by definition, should not be in the UK and therefore cannot volunteer.

If someone wishes to come as an unpaid worker (volunteer) to the UK the organisation must apply to be a 'sponsor' organisation. This means that the organisation will be licensed to issue certificates of sponsorship for their workers. This has a cost involved and for those organisations that are interested in doing this please look at the UK Border Agency website for information on applying.

Ask Kathy
Advice for groups in Leeds
www.val.org.uk/askkathy.php

If someone is already in the UK and wants to volunteer they must check their own visa or entry clearance conditions to ensure they are allowed.

However, someone who is in the UK on a visitor or student visitor visa is not allowed to volunteer. Someone on a student visa should be allowed to volunteer, although there may be restrictions so they should check the conditions.

- It is vital that individuals take responsibility for ensuring that they are allowed to volunteer as it could affect their immigration status.
- If in doubt please contact the UK Border Agency.

Volunteer Centre Leeds
Enterprise House
12 St Paul's Street
Leeds LS1 2LE
0113 395 0405
volunteering@val.org.uk
Visit www.val.org.uk for opening times

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We also provide tailor made training, organisational support, mentoring and evaluations. Get in touch for more information
www.steveskinnerassociates.org.uk
 0113 225 4671



Do you want to discover the ways that volunteers could benefit your organisation?

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To find out more please contact Natasha Mort
 Phone **0113 395 0405**
 Email volunteering@val.org.uk
www.val.org.uk/page/volunteering

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About Voluntary Action Leeds (VAL)

Voluntary Action Leeds is the Council for Voluntary Service in Leeds. We provide innovative and direct support, services and specialist advice to Third Sector organisations across Leeds, helping them to carry out their work and ensuring they are well represented in partnership work.

To find out more visit: www.val.org.uk

Next Issue Deadlines Spring 2012

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 For further information, to advertise or to submit an article call 0113 297 7920 or email communications@val.org.uk

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Free membership is available to Third Sector groups with an annual income of less than £20,000. For groups with an income of more than £20,000 we charge a fee, the fee is tiered based on your organisation's income.

Paid members receive our printed newsletter 'Voluntary Action Leads'. Free members can choose to receive the printed newsletter, for a fee of £25 per year.

To find out more visit www.val.org.uk/page/membership or contact VAL • tel 0113 297 7920 • email info@val.org.uk

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