

# News

## REFUGEE RESPONSE

SUPPORTED BY:



Catholic Care



ST MONICA'S HOUSING  
LEEDS



## Diocesan Refugee Support Group

In October last year Pope Francis called on our generosity and solidarity to recognise and act upon our common humanity in response to the growing refugee crisis.

Cardinal Nichols followed this stating that as a Catholic community "we need to be committed to helping families and children who are driven out of their homes over a long period". We can all contribute and play our part in helping to support these most vulnerable people in our communities through welcome, hospitality and celebration by:

- Prayer
- Financial support
- Time and personal skills

We can all be attentive to those who are vulnerable and newly arrived in our local communities and Parishes. A warm welcome can be the most simple yet effective of gifts we can all offer.

It was against this backdrop that the Diocese started to respond. The Diocesan Refugee Support Group was formed from established charities already in our Diocese, SVP, Catholic Care, Justice & Peace and St Monica's Housing.

# 2034

Eritreans seeking  
asylum in the UK  
in 2015

The Church has much to offer, but we didn't want to work just on our own and have been and will continue to be more effective working in collaboration with others and being part of a co-ordinated response. Since October 2015 representatives from the Diocese have started working with local authorities and other organisations working with refugees, reaching out to the most marginalised in our society.

You can read of the work that has been undertaken as an initial response to the refugee crisis in this newsletter.

**For I was hungry  
and you gave me  
food, I was thirsty  
and you gave  
me drink, I was a  
stranger and you  
made me welcome.**

**Matthew 25:35**

# Welcome

“only mercy can truly contribute to a more human world”



“Faced with the tragedy of tens of thousands of refugees who are fleeing death by war and by hunger, and who are on the path towards a hope for life, the Gospel calls us to be neighbours to the smallest and most abandoned, to give them concrete hope”

Pope Francis, 6th September 2015

Pope Francis reminds us that “only mercy can truly contribute to a more human world” and we must all challenge the “globalised indifference” that enables injustice in the world to prevail. The Holy Father’s message is that the problem of injustice, where love is absent, is not something for others such as politicians, policy makers and international organisations to address but a personal responsibility for each one of us; it is a personal agenda with a very personal responsibility for each of us to make love present in our everyday lives for the common good and for justice for all.

Since Pope Francis called Catholics around the world to action in his Angelus address last October, the migrant crisis has worsened.

More people than ever are entering the European Union and the Greek President has warned that his country cannot become a “warehouse for souls”. Not a week passes by without news of a sea crossing ending in the tragic deaths or hearing of the worsening conditions in camps for refugees and asylum seekers.

Amid all this media publicity real lives are at stake, the lives of those too terrified to stay in their homes. We are all becoming increasingly concerned for those vulnerable women and children, especially unaccompanied children, now desperate and vulnerable to exploitation and human traffickers.

My brothers and sisters, we can all help by showing a little mercy.

One way to be merciful is to support refugees and asylum seekers by getting involved through our prayers and our practical action.

However, we cannot do this alone, we need the support, enthusiasm and others to walk with us on this journey of mercy.

The Leeds Diocesan Refugee Support Group is trying to respond to Pope Francis’ call to give concrete hope to some of those many refugees. I commend its work to you and ask you to support it in whatever way you can and to pray for all those refugees and their families in the ongoing crises around our world.

*+ Marcus Stock*

Marcus  
Bishop of Leeds

## Myth Busters

Fact or fiction?  
Do you know  
the answer?

Fiction	Fact
The UK has more asylum seekers than most countries.	NO it doesn't. The UK receives just 5% of all new asylum claims within the EU.
Most asylum seekers are illegal.	There is no such thing as an illegal asylum seeker.
Asylum seekers and refugees receive large handouts from the state.	NO. They actually receive around £5 per day.
Britain's asylum system is soft.	Britain's asylum system is very tough. 6 out of 10 claims were refused in 2014.
Asylum seekers drain the welfare budget and NHS.	Refugees make a huge contribution to the UK.
Most asylum seekers end up as criminals.	Asylum seekers and refugees are law abiding citizens.

# St Monica's Housing

St Monica's was formed in 2010 in response to the desperate plight of the hundreds of destitute asylum seekers in the city living rough or sleeping on a friend's sofa or makeshift bed. It followed discussions between the St Vincent de Paul Society, Leeds Justice and Peace and Catholic Care as to how vacant Church property might be used to ease the hardship.

A safe and stable temporary environment is provided where residents are treated with dignity and respect and assisted in progressing the difficult asylum process. The forty-first resident is shortly to be accommodated at the latest property to be used, a former presbytery in South Leeds.

St Monica's Housing was formed in 2010 in direct response to the plight of refugees.

To date priority has been given to accommodate female asylum seekers who have come from traumatic situations as they are considered to be the most vulnerable. Grants and donations are used to cover the running costs of the properties and to provide a small allowance for food and other necessary expenses.

Over  
**40**  
people  
supported  
since 2010



# Meetings

Northern  
Diocese Refugee  
Co-ordinators 8th  
September 2016

It's a year since Pope Francis called upon the Catholic community to respond to the refugee crisis. One of the responses was the invitation for every diocese to identify a refugee co-ordinator. In the Leeds Diocese this role is now fulfilled by Catholic Care through the Diocesan Refugee Support Group and part of the work has involved working with other co-ordinators in the north who include:

- Mary Kilcoyne, Catholic Children's Society, Diocese of Shrewsbury
- Carol Hill, Catholic Care, (Diocese of Leeds)
- Rev. Hugh Pollock, Diocese of Lancaster Faith and Justice Commission

- Steve Atherton, Archdiocese of Liverpool Justice and Peace Commission
- Mark Wiggin, Caritas Diocese of Salford

The purpose of the meetings is to:

- To co-ordinate better our activities as Refugee Co-ordinators in our own diocese
- To share information, good practice and collaborate where possible
- To inform our strategy and how best to fulfil these roles
- To link to national bodies especially CSAN and Office for Migration Policy.

As always the September meeting was inspiring.

## SVP Support

SVP is playing a major part in helping refugees and asylum seekers. Our members have visited the homes of nearly fifty different families. These are mainly Syrian people who have escaped that war torn country and whose journey to freedom was almost always an epic achievement in itself. In each case these people have been provided with 'a roof over their heads' - but very little else.

We have been able to assist them with a great many of the basic needs that so many of us take for granted. One of our members visited a house where a mother and father and four children under the age of seven had been living for three weeks.

The only furniture in the house was a single chair, a cot, a borrowed fridge in the kitchen, a cooker on which the oven door didn't fit properly, a few oddments of crockery and cutlery, a large number of blankets and a lightweight carpet on the floor which was where they slept. Within 48 hours we had fitted this house out with all basic necessities including white goods, beds, bedroom furnishings, seating, a TV and toys for the children. The smiles and evident joy and appreciation of these good people was a reward in itself.

Across the large number of families we have visited we have been able to provide a wide range of 'white goods', many basic house furnishings such as arm chairs and occasional tables, blankets, food mixers and blenders, vacuum cleaners and TVs.

It is interesting to note that whilst some people might regard a TV as something of a luxury item, to people in these circumstances it provides a means of keeping in touch with events in their home country, it provides a medium by which they can learn the language that they will now need and for children it provides not only entertainment but will assist them in their education.

Our visits have brought us into contact with people of many trades and professions. We have met labourers, tradesmen, craftsmen, teachers, nurses, doctors and dentists. Whatever their previous walk of life those we have met have always been, friendly, hospitable and appreciative of our support. They are keen to find work and to be self-sufficient. We maintain contact with some of them on a befriending basis. They are usually Muslim but to us they are just people in need of a hand of friendship and a little support.

## Refugee Week

**20th to 25th  
June 2016**

This week takes place every year across the world. Here in the UK, Refugee Week is a nationwide programme of arts, culture and educational events that celebrates the contribution of refugees to the UK and encourages a better understanding between communities. To mark Refugee Week Catholic Care staff gathered for a period of quiet reflection and prayer for those refugees seeking sanctuary. Father Creasey joined the gathering and led the thoughtful prayer service.



## World Refugee Day

World Refugee Day on 20th June 2016 saw much activity in St Francis of Assisi Primary School, Beeston, Leeds with a range of activities in relation to the refugee crisis. Mrs Joanne Moreton, Deputy Headteacher, talked to the children about her experience of visiting the refugee camps in Northern France and assemblies throughout school included children leading prayer on kindness, care and compassion.

The children had also been very busy collecting food items to welcome refugees. They decorated boxes before filling them with rice, pasta, beans and other basic items.



**The children called these boxes "Hampers of Hope" with each box containing a welcoming prayer card which they had written themselves.**

## Please tell us what you are doing

Bishop Marcus hears about such good work being undertaken by people to help those in need in all sorts of ways as he travels throughout the Diocese. He would like to celebrate all that goes on in supporting our brothers and sisters. Please share your plans with us. What ideas do you have for using your talents to help others? If you tell us early enough, we can help you make it happen – and maybe even get it promoted so that your story can inspire others.

**Please contact Deacon Joe Cortis, Bishop's promoter of Caritas Leeds, [joseph.cortis@dioceseofleeds.org.uk](mailto:joseph.cortis@dioceseofleeds.org.uk)**

## Prayer

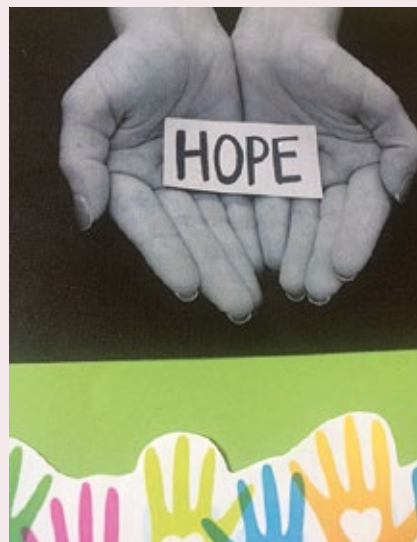
O God, to whom no one is a stranger, and from whose help no one is ever distant, look with compassion on refugees and exiles, on segregated persons and lost children; restore them, we pray, to a homeland, and give us a kind heart for the needy and for strangers. Amen

5%

of all EU asylum  
claims come  
to the UK

## Catholic Care's initial response

Representing the Diocese, Catholic Care was able to provide an initial response to the refugee crisis through its Christmas appeal. This appeal focused on baby clothes & toiletries, toys and food. When refugees arrive in our country they have absolutely nothing except for the bag they can carry if they are lucky and are in need of a warm welcome and the basic necessities of life. Catholic Care has supported the Syrian Community in Leeds, Headingley Children's Centre, Yorkshire Aid, Leeds Food Aid Network, One Nation Batley and We Are Wakefield in their support of the refugee camps at Dunkirk, Syria and Iraq.



To mark Refugee Week in June children at St Francis of Assisi Primary School in Beeston, Leeds made hampers of food to welcome refugees in need, calling them "Hampers of Hope".

59

Refugee families  
supported



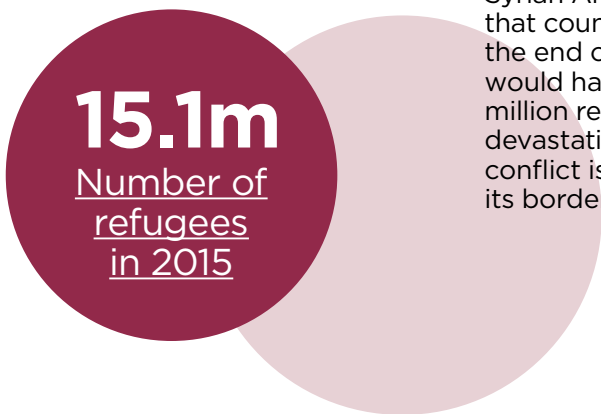
## Gianna

Throughout 2016 Catholic Care's Gianna Project has helped an increasing number of asylum seekers and refugees. This project was first launched by Bishop Roche 5 years ago in 2011 to deliver practical help to individual women in an unplanned pregnancy situation. The Gianna Project is open to women of all ages and backgrounds who find themselves worried or isolated when they become pregnant.

Over the past 12 months or so the project has seen a significant increase from the refugee community and has now supported 59 families across Bradford and Leeds with referrals coming from Bradford Action for Refugees, British Red Cross, Homeless & New Arrivals Team (Bradford), Refugee Action (Bradford), PAFRAS (Leeds) and the Syrian Community in Leeds. However, the project is receiving an increasing number of requests from Health Visitors/children's centres to support refugee families, so this total could increase by at least 16 extra families in the near future.

# Important facts

Within 4 years the global population grew by 4.7million persons – some 45%



The total number of refugees has increased significantly worldwide over the past 4 years:

2011	10.4m
2012	10.5m
2013	11.7m
2014	14.4m
2015	15.1m

The main contributing factor to this trend has been the war in the Syrian Arab Republic. Excluding that country, the increase from the end of 2011 to mid 2015 would have been only half a million refugees (5%). Clearly, the devastating effect of the Syrian conflict is being felt far beyond its borders.

Where are those seeking asylum in the UK coming from?

From January to July 2015 the applications for asylum in the UK totalled 19,196. The top 10 countries of origin for 12,768 of these were:

1. Eritrea	2,034	10%
2. Sudan	1,736	9%
3. Pakistan	1,700	9%
4. Iran	1,353	7%
5. Syria	1,314	7%
6. Afghanistan	1,224	6%
7. Albania	996	5%
8. Nigeria	862	4%
9. Sri Lanka	805	4%
10. Iraq	744	4%

People are seeking asylum to escape from civil wars, conflicts and suppression of human rights.

# What can we do?

As the Catholic Community we have a strong presence within our local communities through our Parishes to make a difference. There is much scope for action. We can take part in activities including:

- Welcoming people on arrival into our communities. Maybe holding a welcome event or something quite simple e.g. tea & chat.
- Offering help with integration into the community with such things as doctors and schools.
- Explaining UK culture and arranging days out e.g. parks, seaside.
- Donating money, through fund raising, to groups and charities who help asylum seekers and refugees.

“What ever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me”

(Mt 25:40)

- Donating clothes, goods and food to these organisations.
- Volunteer to develop skills. Helping with learning English e.g. through a conversation group.
- Helping asylum seekers with transport costs e.g. buying saver tickets or travel passes.
- Promotion of understanding in your Parish.
- Praying and reflecting and keeping the issue at the forefront of our minds.

To get involved please contact Catholic Care (Diocese of Leeds) 11 North Grange Road, Headingley, Leeds LS6 2BR.

SVP National Office, (who will redirect) 020 7703 3030 info@svp.org.uk

# What's next

Are you interested in finding out more about how you and your Parish could support the Diocese in its work with this humanitarian crisis?

Please join the Diocesan Refugee Support Group for an information evening to be held at **Hinsley Hall, 62 Headingley Lane, Leeds, LS6 2BX on Wednesday 30th November 2016 7.30pm – 8.30pm.**