



Justice and Peace Refugee Project

Annual Report 2024



KEY FACTS: January 1st 2024 - December 31st 2024

100

Client Sessions

Client drop-in sessions take place on most Wednesdays and Fridays.

3,503

Client Visits

The number of clients visiting the centre in person has remained similar to the last Annual Report.

327 (£14,230)

Supermarket Vouchers

Supermarket vouchers were issued for destitute clients throughout the year. A further £1475.00 was provided to clients through Christmas vouchers.

14,123 (£98,862)

Food Bags

The project relies heavily on donations of food and toiletries. The value of food bags provided has risen by £8664.00 since the last Annual Report.

452

New Clients

Client numbers vary as people enter and leave the area. This year we have had over 450 new registrations.

170

Babies Supported

An estimated 170 babies were supported with formula milk and nappies during 2024.

452

Clients Supported With Clothing

452 clients were supported by the SVP with clothing and household items during the year.

£48,810

Donations Received

For the financial year 1st April 2023 – 31st March 2024, we gratefully received £48,810 in financial donations to the project, most of which are used to purchase food, vouchers and other associated costs.

£46,000 Grant Funding

For the financial year 1st April 2023 – 31st March 2024, grant funding to cover employment, rent and other core costs was gratefully received from the Richard Whittington Fund through Mercers (£25,000), Caritas (£5000), the Sisters of Mercy, Sunderland (£5000) and an anonymous donation (£5000).

In addition, a grant of £5000 was received from the Neighbourly Foundation, some of which was used to purchase a fridge and freezer; £1000 was received from Coca Cola (through Neighbourly) towards hygiene and nappy products. An anonymous donation of £841 was also used to purchase a defibrillator.

A MESSAGE FROM DAVID ARCHIBALD

Chair of the Justice and Peace Refugee Project Steering Group



Throughout 2024 we have continued to develop and consolidate our support of the people using our Justice and Peace Refugee Project. The data shows how the numbers of clients has been maintained throughout the year.

The Tyneside area remains a major dispersal area for the Home Office. The low levels of Government support, with the ongoing cost of living crisis means that the support we offer is more important than ever.

Effectively we find there are 3 categories of clients: there are those receiving some Home Office support whilst being accommodated in hotels, those living in flats or houses funded by the Home Office and people who have no recourse to public funds, as their claim to asylum has been refused. This latter group are truly destitute and homeless and will always be our priority.

The support we offer takes the form of a warm welcome, acceptance and signposting to services that people may require. Due to the generosity of donors, we also provide basic food bags to all our clients and for those who are destitute, a monthly supermarket voucher currently worth £45. We also have been able to fund a small Christmas bonus voucher for our clients.

In 2023 we increased the amount of food available to our clients through the charity Neighbourly. In 2024 and into 2025 we will have increased the amount of food available through joining the FairShare Scheme. We have to pay a monthly amount to join the scheme and will review how well this works over the coming year. We also often receive surplus fresh food from the SVP to pass onto our clients. Lidl's Community Fund grant, obtained last year, means that we were able to buy fridges to store donations of fresh and frozen food and pass it on to clients.

We continue to provide English classes as required, but the need has somewhat reduced as Newcastle College has extended its accredited English classes and people can access them without having a six month wait as in the past.

Working with the SVP we have also been able to provide good quality second hand clothing and homewares to our clients. This is an extremely valuable service as so many people arrive with only basic clothing, often unsuitable for our climate and do not have the money to buy more.

We aim to mitigate the hostile environment often promoted by some politicians and sections of society and demonstrate our commitment to the gospel values of welcoming the stranger. As Bishop Paul McAleenan, named Bishop for refugees and migrants, has said it is heartening to "witness the support for refugees, even in the face of so many challenges and misunderstandings in our society. The willingness of so many to walk together, listen, and learn from one another speaks to the ongoing commitment of our communities to welcome the stranger and stand in solidarity with the most vulnerable among us." This is something we try to do every day at the project.

I would refer you to the statistics presented separately which show the extent of the work we have been engaged in over the last year.

We continue to benefit from the insight, organisational skills and commitment of Azad Hasan, our project co-ordinator. Azad has continued to build up links with agencies such as Action Foundation, WERS, the Red Cross and other organisations such as the Reed Services for Refugee Employability to support our clients and help them integrate into society and life in the UK. Sadly, organisations are constantly under threat from funding being removed; that indeed has been the fate of Reed. The project is a member of Newcastle City of Sanctuary and Azad regularly attends meetings with the other partners.

We are grateful to the diocese who give us logistical support such as safeguarding advice, training and DBS checking, financial advice and HR support. Azad also reports monthly to the steering group and prepares monthly data sheets which are circulated to our supporters giving them an insight into the work being carried out by virtue of their generosity.

In June 2024 Sarah Spedding, our project worker, retired from the project. I would like to take the opportunity for thanking her for all her hard work. Azad and Sarah worked together closely to ensure the smooth day to day running of the project, supporting clients, liaising with the SVP and co-ordinating the work of both volunteers and donors.

Volunteers are the backbone of the organisation and take on many roles. They receive the deliveries of donated items from parishes, schools and groups, sort the new stock, buy food items from money donated by groups and individuals and make up the many bags distributed every week. Named volunteers on a weekly basis also collect the fresh food and surplus items donated from supermarkets.

On Wednesdays and Fridays volunteers are ready to fulfil various roles as the project opens to our clients. Some receive the clients and assist them with the food bags, issue the supermarket vouchers and, where appropriate, signpost them to the different services; others teach conversational English. All volunteers work to make people feel valued and welcome and are ready to listen and support them with the issues they face.

None of this could be achieved without the support from the various parts of the local community. We receive regular financial support from monthly donations from many individuals as well as the regular deliveries of foodstuffs and toiletries from parishes, individuals and schools. We often receive money from Parish fund raising activities. All this support is most valued, especially at this time of a cost of living crisis when there are so many demands on people's finances.

A small group of volunteers are working together to increase our contact with local

diocesan schools. Already there have been visits to the project from local schools and Azad has also spoken to groups of students in schools. Not only does this help the project but it also helps the students understand some of the issues faced by people seeking asylum in our area and demonstrates how they can support them.

We were delighted this year to be invited by members of Haydon Bridge Parish to spend a day with them in August. A busload of mothers and children from the project spent the day in the beautiful gardens with activities and food provided by the church group. It was enjoyed by everyone.

The core costs of the project are secured by funding from charitable foundations and other funders. Our treasurer, Marjory Knowles, works unceasingly throughout the year to secure funding and for this I am most grateful. Our most recent funders are listed separately in the report.

The project is supported by a Steering Group which reports to the Justice and Peace Co-ordinating Council. This Steering Group is volunteer-led and includes volunteers from the Project, Fr Adrian Tuckwell, head of Caritas in the diocese and John Kilgour, SVP Tyne council president. It has been my privilege to chair the steering group since 2023, and I would like to use this opportunity to thank all the members for their work and their support to me.

The project has now been in existence for over 23 years, and it seems it is needed now more ever.

Thank you for the support you have given in the past and what you continue to offer to the Justice and Peace Refugee Project. It is truly appreciated by all those who use the project. With all best wishes,

David Archibald
Chair, Justice and Peace Refugee Project
Steering Group



Memories of Our Year



THOUGHTS FROM OUR PROJECT CO-ORDINATOR, AZAD HASAN

In 2024, the Justice and Peace Refugee Project continued to provide essential support to asylum seekers, particularly those who are destitute. This work would not have been possible without the unwavering dedication of our volunteers and the generosity of our donors. We are deeply grateful to all who contributed, as their support has been instrumental in sustaining the project.

A significant number of our clients remain without the right to work and receive minimal assistance from the Home Office. The complexity of the asylum process, combined with a backlog of cases, has left many clients in limbo for extended periods, sometimes lasting years. This prolonged uncertainty has led to increasing reliance on our services, as clients endure hardship while waiting for decisions on their applications.

In response to the growing demand and the poverty faced by many in this community, we worked to expand our food donations by getting support from more parishes and supermarkets. While we continued our partnerships with local parishes, we also received fresh food donations every Wednesday and Friday from Sainsbury's Gosforth, as well as from Aldi in Kingston Park, Westerhope, and Fawdon. Our heartfelt

thanks go to Neighbourly for coordinating these donations, and to the supermarkets for their massive generosity.

In addition to food support, we maintained a drop-in service and fostered strong relationships with various service providers for asylum seekers in Newcastle. Our goal was to refer clients to services that we cannot directly provide, including West End Refugee Services (WERS), North England Refugee Services (NERS), Action Foundation, Recycle Bike, Reed, SVP for clothing, the Law Centre, local authorities, and police services. We are grateful to these organisations for their ongoing support. This network of referrals ensured that clients received the services they needed while awaiting decisions on their applications.

The impact of our work has been profound. Beyond addressing immediate needs like poverty and isolation, we have included provisions for children such as milk and nappies. We created welcoming spaces where clients could access refreshments and find a sense of community. In 2024, dozens of clients and their children received positive decisions on their asylum applications, allowing them to begin new lives in the UK. Our project has played a crucial role in helping them take the first steps toward a fresh start.

Azad Hasan
Project Co-ordinator

DEVELOPING LINKS WITH DIOCESAN SCHOOLS

We have a wonderful resource in the Catholic Primary and Secondary Schools across our Diocese and there are many reasons why developing stronger links with them would be mutually beneficial. These include:

- Developing an awareness among young people of issues in relation to Refugees and those seeking asylum
- Offering schools practical ways of broadening their curriculum and outreach activity
- Potentially generating additional contributions of food and finances for the project
- Providing opportunities for project volunteers to interact with and engage young people.

A small group of project volunteers has continued, slowly but surely, with its work to strengthen links with our schools. In particular this year we have:

- Developed an engaging PowerPoint presentation with associated activities for use in a primary school setting. This explains, in an accessible way, the issues faced by refugees and those seeking asylum and encourages pupils to 'put themselves in their shoes'.
- Held information sessions for project volunteers to explain the work we have been undertaking and to seek additional members to join us in this.
- Had very productive conversations with a member of the Diocesan Education Team who is being supportive of our efforts to

communicate with and engage schools. As a result, the project has featured in diocesan communications with schools and we have been invited to input on the project at RE Leaders' Days later this year.

- Continued to build upon the excellent partnership we have with St Mary's Secondary School in Newcastle who, each Christmas, provide a large number of beautifully presented hampers full of items for distribution to our clients. This year we were also invited to say a few words about the project at an end of term carol service in the school.

So, our work continues and is gradually bearing fruit. However, we have to be realistic about what we can offer and really need additional volunteers to join the team if we are to maximise the huge potential that developing these links can bring - both to schools and to the Justice and Peace Refugee Project.



Tony Sacco
Volunteer

AWAY DAY AT ST JOHN OF BEVERLEY CHURCH, HAYDON BRIDGE



On Saturday, August 31st, a group of our clients – 15 adults and 27 children – took part in an Away Day at St John of Beverley Church grounds in Haydon Bridge, accompanied by our Project Co-ordinator and volunteers from the project and from Haydon Bridge parish.

It was one of the few glorious days of the summer 2024. On their arrival, the group were given a wonderful welcome and, following hot and cold drinks and introductions being made, there was a puppet show for the visitors, followed by a walk around the grounds and a quick parachute game.



A delicious vegetarian lunch was served, after which there were a variety of outdoor games organised, including table tennis, pool, badminton and varied races. There were also indoor activities, such as jewellery making, T-shirt design & printing and activities for the younger children.

The afternoon was concluded with the arrival of musicians and a Northumbrian piper. Some traditional Northumbrian tunes were shared and two Syrian children also sang for everyone.

The day was a huge success and thoroughly enjoyed by everyone. We are hoping to repeat the experience in 2025. We are very grateful to the parishioners and volunteers who organised and took part in this event and provided our clients with such an enjoyable experience and the opportunity to have a break from some of the difficulties they face in their daily lives.

Nicola Vaughan
Volunteer

SUCCESS STORIES

Hala and Karima are two women from Africa who came to the UK at different times, yet both faced significant challenges within the complexities of the asylum process, which led them to experience destitution for several years. For an extended period, they relied on aid from various charitable organisations, including the Justice and Peace Refugee Project. The monthly supermarket gift cards provided to them were a vital lifeline during this difficult time. Hala has recently been granted leave to remain and is now able to settle in the UK. Reflecting on her journey, she shared, "I will always remember the immense support your project gave me." Similarly, Karima expressed her deep gratitude for the long-term assistance she received from the project, especially after resolving her immigration status through a family arrangement. Both women are now on the path to rebuilding their lives, thanks in no small part to the continued support they received during their most challenging moments.

SH from Syria registered with the project before COVID 19 times. Shortly after getting leave to remain, he was given the opportunity to work in a pharmaceutical company in North East England. He came to the project and shared this good news with some of our volunteers.

NK and her two children relied on the Justice and Peace Refugee Project for 8 years prior to receiving leave to remain. She came every two weeks to get food, including milk and nappies for her younger children. The project was particularly crucial for her children. After being granted leave to remain, she thanked our volunteers and the church, highlighting the project's impact on their daily lives.

WHAT OUR CLIENTS TELL US

I come to St Vincent Center since 2023. Azad and his team supporting kids with naps and milk and food without this help I don't know how help my kids

Thank you so much

I am getting support from justice and peace Refugee Project since 2022. I became destitute when my claim was refused. The justice and peace gives me food and voucher every month. With their support I will not survive

Best wishes

My name is Aida I'm a refugee . JP projected helped me with food bank and vouchers . I'm very happy with the project because without them i can't have proper food on my table . Thank for the help .

13:12

Hello, thank you for helping us, we are asylum seekers in this country, for the food you provide us, for the activities and for teaching the language as well.

Thank you very much. 🙌 🙏

17:

This project is really useful for people can't stand the life cost, so it provide some aid which is helpful for people in hotels or at homes. People here are super friendly and nice to client and supporters. Thanks for all of you.

Wonderful people who gave me all the support in the first stages of asylum, with all my love for them
Om ar

I came to Sant Vincent from February 2024
I love it, I found a friendly people here
I thank them for support me,



Thank you so much for helping humanity, it means so much, God bless you & help you in every way you all wished.

with love,

ALI

Great place, lovely people and very welcome and never judged. friendly staff like Azad really helps us to be strong. thanks for all your helps.

I was invited to the St Vincent project on the 26/4/23, when I got there the people was very amazing and helpful, the project was a great help to my self and that of my family. I must say thank to the entire staff at the project and may God continue to bless all hand the source. Thank to all staff.

Thanks for your constant support and kindness with providing essential food materials and hygien products for who are in need in a warm and friendly environment

Hi, thank you for helping refugees by providing food banks, learning English, and doing fun activities!

17:

JP is good
Thank you church
THANK YOU
Thank you JP
Thank you
I thank the church for help



Lord, make us bearers of hope
so that where there is darkness, Your light may shine
and where there is discouragement,
confidence in the future may be reborn.

Lord, make us instruments of Your justice,
so that where there is exclusion, fraternity may flourish
and where there is greed,
a spirit of sharing may grow.

Lord, make us builders of Your kingdom
together with migrants and refugees,
and with all who dwell on the peripheries.

Lord, let us learn how beautiful it is
to live together as brothers and sisters.

Bishop McAleenan – World Day of Migrants and Refugees 2022

The Justice and Peace Refugee Project is based at St Vincent's Centre, New Bridge Street, Newcastle upon Tyne NE1 2TQ. For more details about our work and how you can support us, please contact our Project Co-ordinator:

jp.refugeeproject@diocesehn.org.uk. or 07407 091184 or [visit our webpage](#).



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