



Justice and Peace Refugee Project

Annual Report 2025



KEY FACTS: January 1st 2025 - December 31st 2025

98

Client Sessions

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

1105

Clients

The project has supported 1105 clients in 2025. This represents 1067 green card clients and 38 white card clients.

320 (£14,400)

Supermarket Vouchers

Supermarket vouchers were issued for destitute clients throughout the year. A further £2400.00 was provided to clients through Christmas vouchers.

14,171 (£115,709)

Food Bags

The project relies heavily on donations of food and toiletries. The value of food bags provided has risen by £16,847.00 since the last Annual Report.

672

New Clients

Client numbers vary as people enter and leave the area. This year we have had over 670 new registrations.

439

Babies Supported

An estimated 439 babies were supported with formula milk and nappies during 2025. This is an increase of 269 from 2024.

358

Clients Supported With Clothing

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

£46,516

Donations Received

For the financial year 1st April 2024 – 31st March 2025, we gratefully received £46,516 in financial donations to the project, most of which are used to purchase food, vouchers and other associated costs. We also received £3047 in Gift Aid.

£17,700 Grant Funding

For the financial year 1st April 2024 – 31st March 2025, grant funding to cover employment, rent and other core costs was gratefully received from Caritas (£5000), the Sisters of Mercy (£5,500) Passionists (£6000) and £200 from the Joicy Trust.

In addition, a grant of £1000 was received from the Hadrian Trust for the costs of the Away Day in Haydon Bridge enjoyed by our clients in the summer.

A MESSAGE FROM DAVID ARCHIBALD

Chair of the Justice and Peace Refugee Project Steering Group



Throughout 2025 we have continued to support clients using our Justice and Peace Refugee Project. The data shows how the numbers of clients have been maintained throughout the year.

The rhetoric around asylum seekers has worsened in the last year, and our clients in the hotel have been subject to especial harassment. Our Refugee Project remains a place where people seeking asylum are made welcome, are offered a hot beverage and support. We are not in a position to take up personal casework, but we do signpost clients to other services that are available. The fact that we exist means that other agencies such as Newcastle City Council visit the Refugee Project to offer housing advice to clients.

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 2025 we increased the amount of food available to our clients through the charity Neighbourly and accessing surplus supermarket food through the FareShare Scheme. Initially we paid for this directly but for most of the past year the fee has been paid via Newcastle City Council.

We also often receive surplus fresh food from the SVP to pass onto our clients. Lidl's Community Fund grant meant that we were able to buy fridges to store donations of fresh and frozen food and pass it on to clients which is highly valued.

We continue to provide English classes as required.

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. 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 to the steering group which meets every two months 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. Azad has worked tirelessly 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. This has been highly successful and there have been visits to the project from local schools. Azad and several volunteers have 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 have also welcomed many visitors to the Refugee Project over the last year. Recent visitors have included the Papal Nuncio and Bishop Stephen as well as visitors from a number of local schools.

We were again delighted to be invited by members of Haydon Bridge Parish to spend a day with them. A busload of families 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, on behalf 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 the project.

The project has now been in existence for over 24 years, and it seems it is needed now more than ever.

Thank you for the support you have given in the past and the support that 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

2025 was an exceptional year for the project. During this period, the reliance on our services has increased. We have also expanded the range of services we provided. This growth reflects the increasing importance of the project for asylum seekers living in the North East of England. The project has become one of the main sources of food and essential toiletry support in the region, and this growing need explains its continued expansion.

Alongside the provision of food, toiletries, nappies, and clothing, we introduced additional forms of support. Some clients were able to volunteer at the SVP Centre, including offering free haircuts to fellow service users. We also signposted clients to a wide range of external services, particularly those requiring housing support after receiving leave to remain. In collaboration with the local authority, we coordinated referrals to ensure clients received appropriate assistance.

ENGLISH CLASSES

The classes take place in a small group round the tables in the main hall of St. Vincent's. This means that people can get their bags of food and toiletries and return to the group. The group varies in size from 2 to 8 clients. Some people turn up for one or two sessions but do not appear again - but given the arbitrary nature of how asylum seekers are moved around and dealt with, that is not surprising. There is a small core of about 4 people who turn up regularly, most weeks. It is difficult to predict the level of

The project has actively supported clients into volunteering and learning opportunities. We believe that, while waiting for an initial decision on their asylum claim, investing time in education, volunteering, and skills development is essential for wellbeing and integration. As a result, several clients are currently volunteering at the SVP Centre. We also referred other clients to attend various courses and workshops that will help them.

Throughout the year, we continued to receive vital food donations from our key supporters, including parishes, project supporters, schools, Fareshare, Neighbourly, and local supermarkets. We are extremely grateful for their ongoing generosity. Without this support, the project would not be able to operate sustainably.

We have also seen an increase in interest from individuals wishing to volunteer with the project, highlighting its growing role within the community. We extend our sincere thanks to both our existing and new volunteers, who remain the foundation and driving force of the project.

Azad Hasan
Project Co-ordinator

English needed in the group because of this coming and going. However, mainly material prepared is of a low intermediate level - this consists of visual material, worksheets and discussion topics. Volunteers running the group source free teaching online or make their own resources. The white board is used a lot! If a complete beginner turns up, there are back-up materials to support them. The students are always helpful and friendly with each other.

Pauline Hughes
Volunteer



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 are 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:

- Produced a bespoke PowerPoint resource about the Project and presented this at Primary School RE Leaders' Development Days in three venues across the North East reaching virtually every Catholic Primary School in the Diocese. These sessions were very well received and have generated a significant amount of interest both in terms of visits from schools to the Project and project volunteers working with pupils in their schools.
- Hosted visits to the project from the pupils and staff of 6 Primary Schools as well as 6th Form students from a Secondary School who spent the full session with us as volunteers gaining direct experience of our work and our clients.



- Visited 7 Primary Schools to present information about the project in full assemblies and/or working in depth with Year 6 classes. The sessions are very practically orientated with engaging quizzes and age-relevant activities – even a song on one occasion! We cover, in an accessible way, the issues faced by refugees and those seeking asylum and help pupils to ‘put themselves in their shoes.’
- On a number of occasions our work with these schools has led to support for the project in the form of food, toiletries and clothing and the development of longer term partnership arrangements.
- 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. Once again, 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 the work of our small group is starting to flourish. However, we 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 23rd, 2025, a group of our clients – 17 adults and 25 children and teenagers – 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. We were lucky with the weather, so the majority of activities planned were outdoors. On their arrival, the group were given a wonderful welcome and, following drinks and introductions being made, they were treated to a short performance from the Dale Singers, followed by a walk around the grounds and some outdoor games.



A delicious vegetarian lunch was served after which there were a variety of outdoor games



organised, including table tennis, pool, badminton, football and cricket. There were also indoor activities, such as jewellery making, T-shirt design & printing and activities for the younger children. Clients also had the opportunity to do some plant potting and to go on a guided local walk around Haydon Bridge. The afternoon was concluded with shared singing, both traditional Northumbrian tunes and some more well known songs. One of the Columbian children present also sang to everyone.

This was the second Away Day planned by Haydon Bridge parishioners and both have been a huge success and thoroughly enjoyed by everyone. 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 the difficulties they face in their daily lives. Plans are already in place for 2026!

Nicola Vaughan
Volunteer

SUCCESS STORIES

Helin and Alan, from Iraq, have been part of our project since 2021. From the beginning, they have always shown great respect and appreciation for the support provided by the project. Their initial asylum claim was rejected, and they have since submitted an appeal. During the long, uncertain period of waiting for a decision, we have continued to support the family not only with food provisions but also by connecting them with opportunities that could benefit them and their two children. In 2025, we invited the family to take part in the Away Day in Haydon Bridge, which was a wonderful experience. Their children especially enjoyed the day, and it provided the whole family with a valuable opportunity to relax and connect with others in the community. We also supported Helin and Alan by involving them in a business training opportunity provided by *First*, helping them develop new skills and build confidence for the future. Helin and Alan often express their gratitude for the project, the volunteers, and the support they have received. Their story reflects the importance of providing not only practical help but also opportunities, encouragement, and a sense of belonging during difficult times.

In early 2025, we registered Ahmed and Mimo, two brothers from Syria, at the project. Both brothers quickly became involved in the project and have since been regularly attending for tea and coffee, collecting their fortnightly food bags, and participating in the English classes. While waiting for a decision on their claim, both expressed a strong desire to give back and support others. We supported them in finding volunteering opportunities with the SVP. Every Tuesday, Mimo provides free haircuts to people attending the SVP hot meal service, while Ahmed offers the same service at our project every Wednesday. Their willingness to help others has been greatly appreciated. Mimo also took part in the Great North Run 10km, proudly completing the race and receiving a medal and participation shirt, a moment of pride and achievement during a difficult period of uncertainty. Their journey reflects the wider impact of the project. We aim not only to reduce isolation and support people facing hardship, but also to create a welcoming space where individuals can stay active, share their talents, build confidence, and feel valued within the community.

WHAT OUR CLIENTS TELL US

Hi my name is abida iam living in newcastle upon tyne nearly 2 years i have no family but my last trip with st vincent support peoples together its was amazing i didnt feel that i have no family i really enjoyed that trip with my children.thanks to all persons which makes this trip for us .its wonderful. Thanks to every one

Hi my name is Rohollah Hosseini and I am very happy to come to this church. It has helped me improve my English and I am happy that they help us immigrants here. Thanks for everything. Rohollah

I learned about the center and was helped with food supplies I was also offered the opportunity to volunteer in the field of barbering. and I committed to a language course with Miss Polly

THANK YOU
JUSTICE AND PEACE
PROJECT FOR YOUR
SUPPORT

I like this place because it helped me a lot. I have been supported in this since I received a negative decision from the Home Office. Through this place I was able to be volunteer at the SVP every Tuesday. I thank Aad and all volunteers for their help. Elyasi.

This clarity is very separate my children received cloth. we also received nappies for my children very helpful people. my children are very happy. Thanks to all volunteers, munn

Hello Azade, I thank you for the picnic we had in August and thank you very much because I really liked everything you had prepared for the hospitality you gave, the songs, the food, the environment, the love, the transportation, my daughter and I had a lot of fun, thank you very much

I first came to this place. I found it very helpful. Every two weeks, they give food for my children. people can visit and use. They help poor people. Thank you so much. Nural

I went to Justice and Peace to get food for my children. They helped me and gave me bread and many food. Thanks to everyone in the center. Mahrood

my: Ahmed Ali This place is good for helping people

Food bank It is important for me I take food every two weeks. I enjoy food because my family like it. I like staff because it helps people and brings the community together. That's really good to hear. Helping or being part of a food bank is a kind and generous thing. I enjoy food bank



Loving Father, our hearts cry out to you at the suffering in our world.

Open our eyes, our ears and our hearts that we may respond
with compassion and equity to the cries of those seeking refuge.

Give us the political will in our complex world to work together in creating a world
free from abuse, war and violence: a world where we care for those who are most
vulnerable; a world where all our resources are shared; a world where
we give respect to each other irrespective of colour, culture or creed.

Give us courage to work for a world in which justice, peace and love
become the foundation on which we build together.

Holy Spirit, comfort and heal the brokenness of our world, strengthen and inspire us
‘to do justice, to love mercy and to walk humbly with our God.’

From a prayer by Bishop Rose Hudson-Wilkin – Churches’ Refugee Network

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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