

PAFRAS NEWSLETTER



Positive
Action
For
Refugees &
Asylum
Seekers

Newsletter 8

An interview with Reverend Andrew Myers



Andrew Myers has actively worked with, and supported PAFRAS for a number of years; and is a member of the PAFRAS Management Committee. In this interview, Andrew explains his work with those seeking asylum in the UK.

PAFRAS: How did you get involved with PAFRAS?

I was a curate at St Aidan's church and at one of our local clergy meetings we were told that PAFRAS was really desperate for food, and whether we could help. It was through that really. Once we found a project like yours, we wanted to work with you. But also, you are doing the work of the gospel for us. So the very least we can do is support you in doing part of our work. It was very clear to me straight away.

PAFRAS: How much of your day to day work is involved with asylum seekers?

Not so much now because I've moved to Middleton, but up until recently when I was

in Harehills about half of my time was spent helping asylum seekers. In the Parish in Harehills it is an area where many refugees and asylum seekers live and many naturally come to St Aidan's and other Parishes in the area seeking help. A lot of them are Christians or Muslims, and a holy place is the first place that many people will go to find assistance. All religious leaders are clear our faith means that we should welcome the stranger. We are all united in that.

PAFRAS: Has this direct assistance linked in with campaigning as well?

Not to push the bible too much but there is a *(continued on page 2)*

May - June 2008

... Interview with Andrew Myers (continued)

...message of 'when I was a stranger you welcomed me. When I was hungry you gave me something to eat, when I was thirsty you gave me something to drink'. And that was very much the inspiration for Christian socialism. Lots of inner city churches were founded by people on the left politically, and on the left in their church groups too. So that's why you'll find that in most cities, with most Anglican churches certainly, if there are homeless people or asylum seekers they will be right at the heart of it and want to support them. They will ride that tradition of the social gospel. And that's why they find it a natural thing to associate with people who are working to certain ideals, who are not necessarily religious. So they make these natural alliances. But those that are on the left theologically as well as politically will seek to work with organisations that are not necessarily religious, like PAFRAS.

In terms of campaigning, also, it is outrageous that people are being made destitute for all sorts of reasons. From a Christian perspective forcing people into destitution departs from Christian principles when the state rejects the stranger and doesn't welcome the stranger. From a non religious point of view this country is supposedly based on democratic principles. Basic human rights; we have supposedly founded our culture on basic human rights and we send people

It is completely cynical to say that we subscribe to human rights legislation and want to see a world where there is peace and at the same time are rejecting people who quite clearly will be going back to the most appalling situations of terror.

danger,
but
people
are still
returned
back.

back to places where they are going to be deprived of the basic human right to life basically. At the very least they are going to suffer torture and all those other kinds of deprivation. The fact that our government is departing from the most basic human rights that made our country what it is, I find appalling. It is completely cynical to say that we subscribe to human rights legislation and want to see a world where there is peace and at the same time are rejecting people who quite clearly will be going back to the most appalling situations of terror. That some places are not safe is not in dispute by our political leaders. It's not in dispute that some areas and many others clearly pose

PAFRAS: Is there anything else you would like to add?

Only that without your work lots of our major concerns would not be addressed at all. So for us it is a privilege to be associated with it.

Appeal for toiletries

At the PAFRAS 'drop-in' (see page 4) as well as the case work conducted; free food parcels, hot meals and toiletries are given out.

Whilst PAFRAS always needs more food, the toiletries are also vital. We have a constant demand for toiletries and in 2007 gave out 638 toiletry packs. These packs contain a variety of items including soap, shower gel, shampoo, toothbrushes, toothpaste, and in some cases women's sanitary products.

We are desperately in need of more toiletries and, for some people, what is given out at PAFRAS are the only toiletries to which they have access.

For further information contact Christine Majid on 0113 2484147 or at pafrasemail@yahoo.co.uk

Short Stop

Urgent request for volunteers

Leeds Asylum Seeker Support Network (LASSN) provides a number of vital services for those seeking asylum. One of these services is a 'short stop' scheme, where volunteers provide short term accommodation and food for those who are destitute. The demands for this service have rapidly increased and, for example, whilst in January 2007 LASSN provided 10 nights accommodation through short stop; in January 2008 this rose to 50 nights.

LASSN require volunteers for a driving service which will involve picking up guests from Leeds city centre, taking them to hosts houses, and introducing guests and hosts. Volunteers will be required to be available between 18.00 – 19.30 (approximately), one day per week. It is envisioned that this driving service will begin in July.

For further information contact Katrina on 0113 3805689 or at shortstop@lassn.org.uk

PAFRAS Information and Communications

In 2007 PAFRAS began publishing a series of briefing papers providing concise analyses of key policies and concerns relating to those who are rendered destitute through the asylum process. Drawing from the experiences of those who have, or are experiencing destitution; these briefing papers offer insight into a corner of society that exists beyond the reach of mainstream provision.

PAFRAS briefing papers can be downloaded at www.pafRAS.org.uk
For hard copies please contact Jon Burnett on 0113 2484147 or at pafRASemail@yahoo.co.uk

Racism, destitution and asylum

In June PAFRAS published the sixth of these briefing papers, focusing on destitution and racist victimisation. Drawing on questionnaires with 20 destitute asylum seekers, and a series of interviews, 'Racism, destitution and asylum' examines the context within which racial violence and harassment is located. PAFRAS briefing paper 6 can be downloaded from

http://www.pafRAS.org.uk/documents/PAFRAS_Briefing_Paper_6_-_Racism_destitution_and_asylum.pdf

For hard copies please contact Jon Burnett on 0113 2484147.

Work, Risk and Undocumented Workers in the North of England

PAFRAS is conducting a research project on undocumented workers' experiences of health and safety risks. This project is funded by the University of Liverpool and the principal researchers are Dave Whyte, Reader in Sociology, and PAFRAS Information and Communications Officer Jon Burnett.

The project will utilise data from detailed interviews with undocumented workers and explore, with reference to the experience of undocumented workers themselves, the challenges faced by existing and new forms of regulation to protect this vulnerable section of the workforce.

A report from this research will be published later in 2008, and will be launched at a one day seminar.

For more information on this project contact Jon Burnett on 0113 2484147 or at pafRASemail@yahoo.co.uk

Brutality and fear: the human costs of dawn raids

Dawn raids have emerged as a central facet of New Labour's asylum and immigration policies, with little semblance of public debate

PAFRAS Briefing Paper 4, published in March 2008, examined 'Dawn raids' and focused on the use of raids within a wider analysis of asylum policy. It drew attention to the impacts of dawn raids, and the fear and harm they generate. In the Summer issue of 'Nerve', a Merseyside based magazine, an edited version of this Briefing Paper was featured. To view this article see http://www.catalystmedia.org.uk/issues/nerve12/dawn_raids.htm

(Photo from Nerve magazine)



New staff at PAFRAS

In May 2008 two new staff members started at PAFRAS.

Fidelis Chebe and Rachel Arundel are both working part time as support workers. This work provides one-to-one support to 'service users' at the PAFRAS drop-in and assists in negotiating relevant services and welfare provision, signposts for relevant support, and provides advocacy on behalf of clients.

Fidelis is also working part time coordinating the PAFRAS 'healthy living' activities. These activities aim to improve well being through a variety of programmes including support for stopping smoking, a range of health treatments, a series of creative art based classes, and a series of outdoor activities (see photos below).

PAFRAS drop-in details

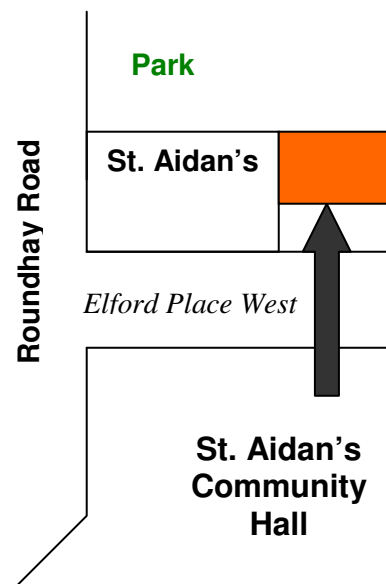
Drop-in times

**Tuesdays –
10.30-12.30**

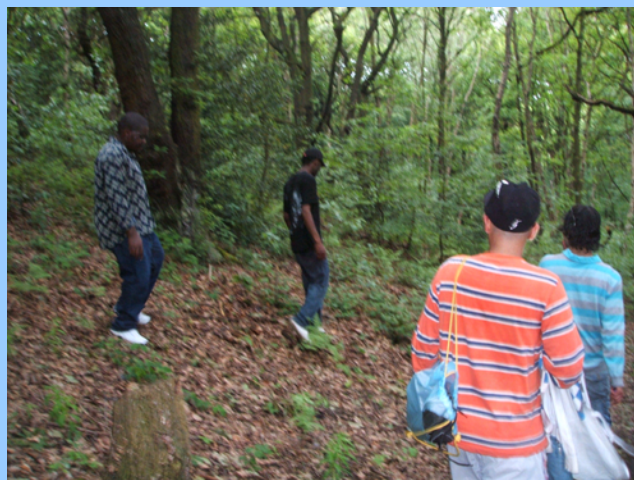
**Thursdays –
10.30-12.30
(food only)**

**St. Aidan's
Community Hall
Elford Place
West
Harehills
Leeds
LS8 5QD**

Archway



Middleton Park June 2008



Thank you

PAFRAS would like to offer our ongoing thanks to those who have previously, and continue to support the work that we carry out. All of the donations that we receive support the broad aims of the organisation, and the food that is given goes directly to those who use the project. This food quite literally sustains certain people and it is no exaggeration to suggest that without this support, certain people would potentially starve. We would also like to publicly thank our volunteers. Their work is invaluable, and without the support of volunteers PAFRAS would not be able to carry out much of the work conducted.

You can now make a donation by debit/credit card on our website. Your donation can go further with the online gift aid function, with the inland revenue giving us an extra 28p for every pound you donate. Please go to www.pafRAS.org.uk and click on 'Making a Donation'.

Published by
PAFRAS © July
2008

www.pafRAS.org.uk