

PAFRAS NEWSLETTER



Positive
Action
For
Refugees &
Asylum
Seekers

Newsletter 15

Still Destitute

In July, the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust published the findings of their third survey into destitution in Leeds.

'Still destitute', written by Hannah Lewis, surveyed four organisations over a four week period earlier in the year. This survey recorded visits by destitute asylum seekers to each organisation.

Over the survey period, organisations recorded 273 visits by people who were destitute. There were 515 visits

recorded overall. The age of those who were recorded as destitute ranged from below 20, to up to 69. And of 21 families recorded, there were 30 child dependents. Organisations recorded 85 separate incidents of rough sleeping, and 100 of the people surveyed had been destitute for over two years. Of the total number of visits, 59% were to PAFRAS.

'Still destitute' provides insight into the way in which people are forced into abject poverty as a result of the asylum system. As it states, 'the number of people being made newly destitute is increasing'. At the same time, and as mentioned above, people are suffering destitution for longer periods of time. The report voices concerns over the effects this has on the mental health of those who experience destitution; as well the manner in which destitution renders people vulnerable to exploitative relationships. In the period of the survey, one man who had been given support by participating organisations attempted to end his own life.

Still Destitute: A worsening problem for refused asylum seekers can be downloaded from <http://www.jrct.org.uk>

July - August 2009

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PAFRAS drop-in and

PAFRAS closed its drop in from 2 June to 23 June 2009. Upon re-opening questionnaires were given to PAFRAS service users about the effects of the closure of the drop-in.

These questionnaires contained six questions, some of which were split into sub-questions. Broadly, these focused on whether the respondent was in receipt of any form of support; whether the recipient needed to see a case worker in the period of the drop-in closure; whether financial support was needed; the effects of a reduced food service; and about any health concerns that arose in this three week period. Overall, 25 of these questionnaires were completed.

Forms of support

Do you have any support?		
	Yes	No
Number	6	19
Percentage	24	76

Of the 25 respondents six people were receiving some form of formal asylum support. 19 people were without support and, as such, had no income, no (legal) way of securing an income, and either had to sleep outside, or were in short term accommodation such as with friends.

Access to case workers

The survey recorded that 18 people needed to see a PAFRAS case worker within the period of the drop-in closure but were unable to do so. Four people explained that they had been to see a caseworker from an organisation other than PAFRAS as a result.

Did you need to see a PAFRAS case worker in the period that the drop-in was closed?		
	Yes	No
Number	18	7
Percentage	72	28

When asked about any difficulties that were faced when the drop-in closed 16 people (or 64 per cent of the respondents) suggested that particular problems had arisen specifically because of PAFRAS' reduced service. The highest proportion of people who emphasised particular problems drew attention to reduced social interaction. However, the answers reflected the range of services that the PAFRAS drop-in offers and issues raised included troubles with accommodation, financial concerns, requiring clothes, needing food, and having to travel long distances to see case workers from other organisations.

Financial support

PAFRAS has a limited capacity to provide hardship payments to those most in need. Further, due to a relationship with the Red Cross, a small number of gift vouchers are given out which can be used to buy food or other items. Although this support is limited, averaging at about £5 per week in cash or gift vouchers for those who do receive this assistance, the survey reflected the extent to which it can provide a lifeline. Whilst the drop-in was closed 20 people stated that they needed hardship payments or gift vouchers. Further, emphasising the low value of welfare support that asylum seekers receive, of the six respondents who were in receipt of some form of formal support, four stated that they had needed further financial assistance in the period whilst the PAFRAS drop-in was closed.

Of the 20 respondents who stated that financial support was needed, 12 gave further details. The most common difficulty mentioned concerned food. One respondent explained, 'I missed you when you were closed as I could not get anything to eat'. Another simply explained that they had 'stopped without food for some days' when the PAFRAS drop-in was closed. A number of people mentioned that without financial support, they were unable to make

PAFRAS closed its weeks in June. The in order to services that are carry out work. In this period food parcels were those who needed

When the drop-in was conducted impacts of its responded to this asked questions any difficulties the drop-in was services were and what effects drop-in had. All of anonymised.

What is presented of the survey responses will be improvements to that can be made. inform the drop-in shape the work

appointments with different organisations and agencies as their phone had run out of credit. Whilst four people drew attention to difficulties in travelling around Leeds as they did not have any means through which to pay bus fares. Two people emphasised that friends had been able to help them financially when the PAFRAS drop-in was closed.

closure: Impacts analysis

drop-in for three drop-in was closed restructure the offered, and to administrative a limited number of still provided to them the most.

reopened, a survey investigating the closure. 25 people survey, which regarding whether were faced whilst closed, what needed the most, the closure of the the surveys were

here is an analysis responses. These used to emphasise the drop-in service In turn, this will services; and that is carried out.

Food provision

Of the 25 respondents 21 people said that they normally received food parcels from PAFRAS, with three people saying that they did not normally receive them, and one person not responding. Emphasising the importance of these items of food, 16 people stated that between half and all of the food they ate, where they were staying each week, came from these food parcels.

PAFRAS provides hot meals for everyone who utilises the drop-in. When asked whether less hot meals were eaten during the closure period 19 people stated that this was the case; with three people stating that it did not make a difference and two people not answering. When asked about whether it had been possible to get extra food from elsewhere 17 people said that they were unable to. Seven people explained that friends had provided extra hot meals whilst the drop-in was closed, and one person did not answer this question. When asked broadly about the effects of the drop-in closure on peoples diets 16 people said that the drop-in closure had some kind of impact, with seven people stating that it made no difference and two people not answering.

Echoing the other answers about food, above, the majority of people explained that they had asked friends for extra support during this period. A number of people stated that they had experienced greater levels of hunger when the drop-in was closed.

Health problems

Responding to a question about access to healthcare, 14 people stated that they had had health problems in the period of the drop-in closure but had not been able to access relevant services. Only two people stated that they did not have any health concerns in this period, with six people stating that they were able to access services and three people not answering.

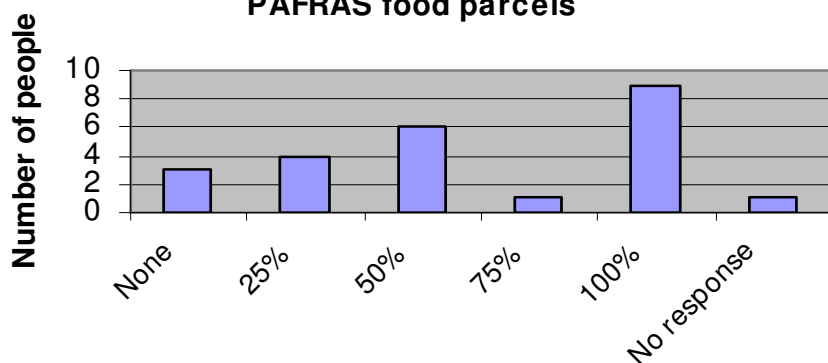
Proportion of respondents with health problems in the closure period, and their ability to access relevant services.

	Number	Percentage
Health problems and unable to access services	14	56
Health problems and able to access services	6	24
No health problems	2	8
No answer	3	12

Finally, the questionnaires asked about any general implications of the drop-in closure. Answers included the unavailability of case workers, lack of food, and reduced opportunities for social interaction. One respondent stated:

'The closure really affects you when you want to talk to somebody and cannot. When you feel close to somebody it is better, it makes you feel more confident and you want to stay in touch with that person'.

Graph 1 - Proportion of food eaten outside of the drop-in, each week, coming from PAFRAS food parcels



Healthcare research

PAFRAS has recently secured funding through the Healthy Leeds Partnership to conduct a research project on refused asylum seekers; access to and experiences of healthcare services.

The aims of the project are to explore barriers to effective healthcare provision, and to set out ways in which access to healthcare services can be improved. Next year, the research will produce a report based on the findings, a summary of this report, and a guide to healthcare rights and how to enforce them that can be distributed to people within the immigration and asylum process.

If you wish to discuss this project, or to receive any information please contact PAFRAS on 0113 2622163 or at pafraemail@yahoo.co.uk

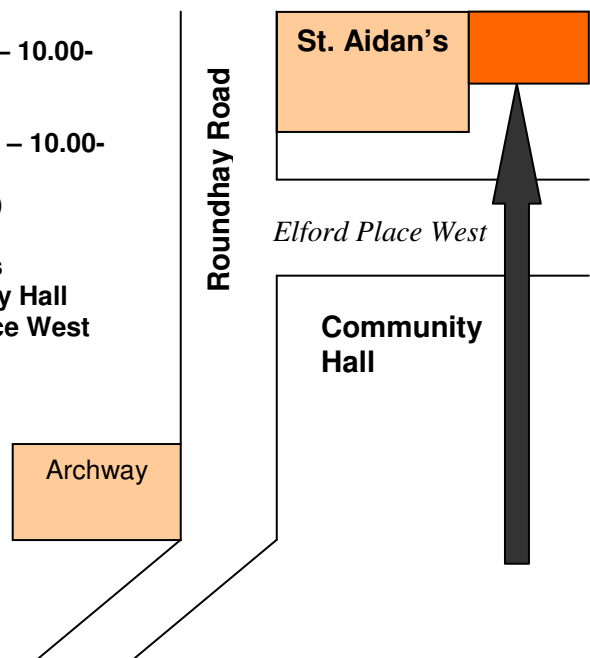
PAFRAS drop-in details

Drop-in times

Tuesdays – 10.00-14.00

**Thursdays – 10.00-14.00
(food only)**

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



Donating to PAFRAS

PAFRAS offers a range of direct services to people who are seeking asylum. As well as the case work conducted at the PAFRAS drop-in, free hot meals, food parcels, clothes toiletries, and hardship payments are provided. All of these services are made possible through donations.

In order to continue our work, we constantly need further donations to sustain these services. In particular, we need:

Food:

- **Tins** (for example tomatoes, vegetables, fish);
- **Dry food** (for example sugar, tea, rice, pulses);
- **Sweets** (for example chocolate bars, chocolate biscuits);
- **As well as** fruit juices, nuts, long life milk, sugar.



Clothes:

- **Baby clothes** (for example hats, scarves);
- **Adults clothes**

Toiletries

- **For example** toothbrushes, toothpaste, women's sanitary products, men's toiletries.

Alternatively, PAFRAS accepts financial donations and if you would prefer to donate in this way then please follow the instructions on our website, or get in touch with us.

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