

PAFRAS NEWSLETTER



Positive
Action
For
Refugees &
Asylum
Seekers

PAFRAS urgently needs food for our twice-weekly 'drop-in' (see p. 4 for details).

The food donations that we receive from a range of organisations, bodies, faith groups and individuals provide an absolutely vital service in feeding those who are rendered destitute through the asylum process. However, as the number of people forced to come to this drop-in increases, so too does the food that is needed.

severely restricted access to statutory provisions, they are the victims of a set of policies which seek to starve them out of the country. In April, one man came to PAFRAS having not eaten for three days.

Our appeal for food comes at a time where the demands of the drop-in are beginning to overtake the supply. For some people, the hot meals and food parcels given out at PAFRAS are literally the only sustenance that they

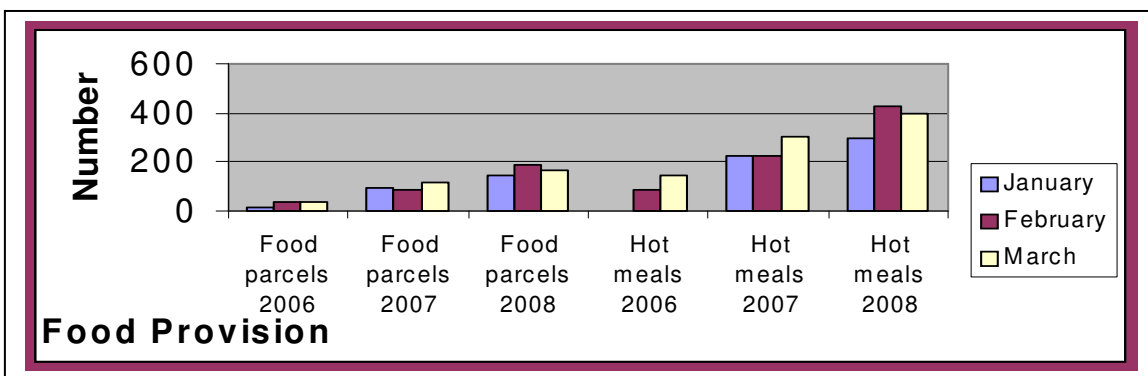
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Already in 2008 there has been a sharp increase

in the number of people who have had to come to the PAFRAS drop-in for food and assistance. In the first two months alone, there were 1209 separate 'visits' from service users; and 124 new people who had not been before. Many of the people who come to PAFRAS are destitute. With no right to work, and

Urgent food crisis

receive. This can equate to two hot meals and two basic food parcels a week. We are running out of food, and if we do so, potentially huge numbers of people may be left with nothing to eat. To discuss food donations please contact PAFRAS Manager Christine Majid on 0113 2484147 or at pafrasemail@yahoo.co.uk



PAFRAS Food Provision January – March, 2006 – 2008

March – April 2008

Positive Action for Refugees and Asylum Seekers
Company No. 5751987

Registered Charity No. 1120950

Registered Address: PAFRAS C/O CHART, 269 Roundhay Road, Leeds, LS8 4HS

www.pafras.org.uk 0113 2484147

STAR sleep-out for destitute asylum seekers

Starting on 5 March at 08.00am campaigners from Student Action for Refugees (STAR) held a 24 hour 'sleep-out'.

Those taking part in this 24-hour event aimed to raise awareness of the plight of those who are forced into destitution by living 'like a destitute asylum seeker' for a day. 'Sleep-outs' were staged across the country and in Leeds over 20 students were involved; holding their event outside the University of Leeds.

As part of the event those involved collected money to be donated to PAFRAS to assist in the work that we carry out. Kathryn Bird – President of Leeds University STAR – further lived on £5 worth of food for the week; roughly the monetary equivalent of what people are forced to survive on each week in the cost of food parcels.

Campaigners from STAR – March 2008



Enforcing destitution on Iraqi asylum seekers

On 13 March, *the Guardian* reported on leaked Home Office correspondence planning to send up to 1,400 rejected Iraqi asylum seekers home as, according to Home Secretary Jacqui Smith, the country is now safe enough for people to return. Those who refuse to sign up to a programme of voluntary return to Iraq will be forced into destitution. PAFRAS' response to this proposal was published in *the Guardian* on 17 March, and is reproduced below.

Failed approaches to Middle East issues

The leaked Home Office correspondence (Iraqi asylum seekers given deadline to go home or face destitution in UK, March 13) goes to the heart of the coercion embedded in British asylum policy. The death toll continues to mount in what is a volatile and

unstable country. Yet the government deems it safe. If this forced removal policy is to go ahead, the 1,400 Iraqi asylum seekers will join up to 280,000 people across the country who have been left destitute with no right to work, no access to housing and unable to use statutory services except in the most extreme circumstances. These include, for example, people from Darfur – another dangerous area that, according to the Home Office, is safe.

It appears that the government is set on making conditions in the UK worse than from where people have fled. Here in Leeds, PAFRAS has roughly 500 visits from destitute asylum seekers every month. If support to Iraqis is ended, they may well be forced to rely on us for food parcels, hot meals, clothes and assistance also.

Christine Majid and Jon Burnett

To view the original article see <http://www.guardian.co.uk/politics/2008/mar/13/immigrationpolicy.immigration>

Easter eggs at PAFRAS drop-in

At the PAFRAS drop-in case workers offer assistance, whilst 'service-users' can receive free food and toiletries; with food parcels given out to those most in need. Simultaneously, a series of activities are run which aim to improve well-being and health. In 2007 PAFRAS had over 4,400 visits from 'service users'.

As well as this advocacy and assistance, the PAFRAS drop-in is an environment where all are welcomed. In March, Easter eggs were given out at PAFRAS and we would like to thank the individual who donated them.



PAFRAS briefing papers

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

In March PAFRAS published the fourth and fifth briefing papers in this series focusing on, respectively, dawn raids and mental health, destitution and asylum.

Dawn raids have become a systematic feature of British asylum policy and in 2006 roughly 22 'enforcement operations' were carried out before 8.00am a day. These raids are conducted for the purposes of detention and removal, yet PAFRAS Briefing Paper 4 emphasises the wider political context in which they are carried out. Drawing from unique interviews with people who have been subjected to such activities; PAFRAS Briefing Paper 4 provides an analysis that locates one of the most brutal tools available to the Home Office within wider asylum policy. It draws attention to the fear that dawn raids engender and

the humiliating and harmful effects they have.

Briefing Paper 5 – Mental health, destitution and asylum – emphasises the manner in which asylum seekers are having mental health problems exacerbated, or caused by a policy framework that imposes destitution. Utilising a small survey conducted by key agencies in Leeds, it draws attention to the severe trauma that many destitute asylum seekers suffer; with over a quarter of respondents having discussed suicide.

Interviews with PAFRAS 'service users' further indicate harrowing levels of isolation, depression, anxiety and stress. Whilst this briefing paper goes on to suggest that restrictions in healthcare services result in a framework wherein desperate needs frequently go unmet.

PAFRAS Information and Communications

As of April 2008 the PAFRAS Information and Communications Officer (ICO) Post has been re-funded by the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust.

The post was initially funded for one year to raise awareness of destitution; inform key policy makers and government; and to provide longitudinal data on the impacts of destitution. Through the post, PAFRAS has been able to draw attention to the human impacts of destitution, and effect change through informing media interventions and working alongside, and in conjunction with, a range of campaigning bodies, agencies and organisations. An ongoing series of briefing papers and research based submissions further provided analysis of the political framework in which destitution is engendered. The initial post holder will continue the work as PAFRAS ICO.

Joseph Rowntree Destitution Inquiry

From 6 April – 4 May the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust is re-running a survey, initially conducted in 2007, on destitution in Leeds.

PAFRAS and four other organisations in Leeds will be assisting in providing (anonymous) information regarding, among other things, the length of time people have been forced into destitution; the support that people have been able to access; and shelter people have been able (or not) to secure.

The previous destitution survey and research was launched in the House of Commons, and aimed to produce workable policy change. It is envisioned that the survey conducted in 2008 will assist in this process by emphasising the long term effects, and levels of destitution.

PAFRAS healthy living activities

Since the beginning of 2008 PAFRAS support worker Emma Powell has been running a series of activities at the PAFRAS drop-in focused on improving well-being.

These activities have proven particularly popular; and have included sexual health advice, art classes, jewellery making, stopping smoking support, music workshops, an allotment project, and a range of sporting activities. Emma is leaving PAFRAS at the beginning of May 2008. The activities that she has run have supplemented her vital case work through which she has worked tirelessly with, and for, destitute asylum seekers. We would like to publicly express how sorry we are that she is leaving, and to wish her the best of luck in the future.

PAFRAS drop-in details

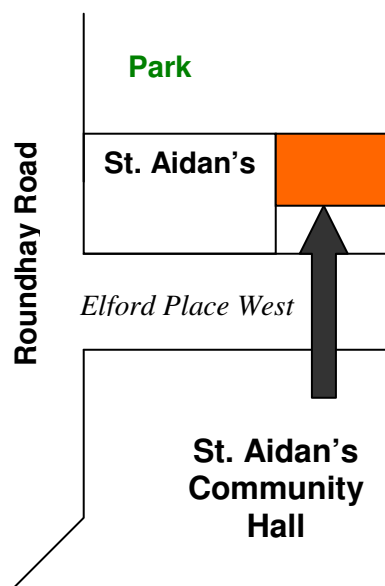
Drop-in times

**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



PAFRAS allotment 12 April 2008



PAFRAS walking activities 10 April 2008



Thank you

The support and donations that PAFRAS receives are vital. We would like to thank all of the people that have volunteered with the PAFRAS healthy living projects and offered their expertise. The numerous classes, lessons, and activities that are being run are largely reliant on this support and have proved hugely beneficial.

We would also like to thank those who have previously, and continue to offer their support to the PAFRAS drop-in and the broader aims of the organisation through their donations in the form of food and finances.

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 © April
2008

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