



# Bradford Ecumenical Asylum Concern

## Annual Report

for the year to 30<sup>th</sup> September 2013



**“Welcome the Stranger”**





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## A Message from John Sentamu, the Archbishop of York

Anyone living or working with those seeking asylum in this country soon becomes aware both of the horrific situations which have forced so many to leave their homes to seek sanctuary, and of the huge challenges facing them as they seek to prove their need for protection and, in the meantime, survive on the most meagre level of statutory support.

If it were not for projects like BEACON in Bradford, Local Authorities, the NHS and others, statutory agencies would be unable to cope with the problems which would come their way. BEACON's various projects bring a degree of humanity and effective practical support to people in the asylum system which can prevent them from going under and sustains them through these challenging experiences.

People whose dignity is respected will make better decisions and choose wisely for themselves and for their families. I salute the staff and volunteers engaged in BEACON for the work they do, and pray that they will continue to be able to offer this invaluable support to their clients.

With every blessing,



## Rita Armitage – Chair of BEACON Executive

Last year I entitled my report **'All change'**. **'Consolidation'** is a more appropriate theme for this current year.

We are delighted that the Archbishop of York, John Sentamu, made a positive response to our request to send a message for this Annual Report. His generous words of commendation are deeply appreciated and a boost to our morale.

Earlier this year we feared that our very future was threatened, even though our work was winning praise in various quarters. In the current economic climate many voluntary sector organisations are seeking funding from a smaller and smaller pot of money. We are indebted to Churches, organisations and individuals for their generous response to our appeal and encouraged by some successful funding bids to Charitable Trusts. We are currently in a happier situation, though by no means complacent. The work to secure funding is on-going.

Special mention must be made of those who sponsored our Annual Walk For Justice, during Refugee Week. 60 people took part and once again were blessed with good weather on the 10 mile walk from Bradford's Centenary Square to Waterside Reporting Centre in Leeds. Whilst enjoying the company and making friends, they were conscious of those for whom this walk is a regular necessity, come rain or shine.

The **BEACON Executive** has met on ten occasions during the last twelve months, including the traditional Away Day. Once again I reiterate my deep sense of privilege in serving as Chair of BEACON and pay tribute to the commitment of the other Trustees and willing volunteers who generously give their time.

Finally, a word of appreciation for our loyal and hardworking employees.

**Eleanor** continues to develop the two aspects of **CHAT** - the hospitable presence at Phoenix House Appeals Court, making great progress in strengthening relationships with the staff; and leading the team of volunteers facilitating the Spotlight English Conversation Club at Thornbury Methodist Church.

**Kezia** provides excellent administrative support, admirable tenacity in fund raising – all those ‘online’ forms seem to need different information and a varied format! - and significant support for the McKenzie Friends volunteers, including training. She is also a very effective ‘networker’ and publicist, which contributes to an increasing awareness of BEACON.

Though concerns remain for the plight of those seeking sanctuary, and the shadow of financial difficulties hang over us, we are in good heart as we mark 8 years since BEACON was established.

*Rita Armitage*



## Kezia Rooke – BEACON Co-ordinator

At the beginning of the year we said goodbye to our CHAT Worker, Fiona Bououden and thanked her for all her hard work. We have now welcomed Eleanor Wood, who has taken on this role and is making some great developments with the project.

Once again, we had a very busy Refugee Week this year. Our 4<sup>th</sup> Annual Walk for Justice was a wonderful success and was a great day for friends, for conversations and for raising awareness of the realities of those fleeing persecution in their home country and looking for safety in Bradford. A huge thank-you to everyone who walked with us or kindly sponsored a walker.

We have been delighted to welcome new volunteers to all of our projects this year. Many of our volunteers are involved with various other organisations across Yorkshire and their knowledge and experience is invaluable. We are extremely grateful to all those who have given their time and effort to BEACON over the past year.

As seems to be the case of the whole of the Charity sector at the moment, BEACON have not been exempt from the effects of the recession. Myself and the Executive have been working very hard submitting funding applications and are extremely grateful and encouraged by the response we have received from our supporters. The need for our work is evident and thanks to the generosity of many, we can continue to support some of the most vulnerable people in the UK.

## **Eleanor Wood – CHAT Worker**

Taking over from Fiona as CHAT Worker in March, I have enjoyed getting to grips with the fantastic projects of CHAT Court and Spotlight, and getting to know the warm and helpful people that make them happen.

I can guarantee that whatever my mood when I arrive at Thornbury Church on a Wednesday morning, I leave feeling buoyed by human kindness. Volunteers provide excellent support, taking more and more initiative in leading the group for games and activities. Numbers of people attending have been steadily increasing, reaching 12 so far, and set to rise still further with the imminent arrival of flyers publicising the group. The group is very mixed - in terms of background, ability, and need - and that is its strength. Very different people come to learn together, and whilst learning English is our focus, I think anyone that has attended Spotlight, whether as a volunteer or as a participant, would attest to the spirit of positivity, fun and fellowship that is at its core.

CHAT Court is running well, three mornings a week. In addition to the dedicated service of providing refreshments and a friendly face to people awaiting their court hearings, CHAT volunteers signpost service users to services across the area. One of the positive results to come from the regular meeting which I am now

holding with Phoenix House management, is their agreement to erect an information stand in the waiting area, which we will fill with information on non-profit support services. This will enable us to maximise our impact, as people will be able to access this information even when CHAT volunteers aren't there. In this way we are strengthening our position as a vital and unique link in the chain of non-profit services.

*Eleanor Wood*



***“Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves,  
for the rights of all who are destitute.***

***Speak up and judge fairly;  
defend the rights of the poor and needy.”***

**Proverbs 31: 8-9**

## Kathryn Larrad – Chair of CHAT

I can't add very much to last year's report as the situation at court has changed little in the past twelve months. The number of asylum seekers appearing there fluctuates from day to day and week to week, without any obvious reason, but on the whole numbers are lower than when we first offered this service, with the result that most cases go straight into Court, without a long stay in the waiting areas. However, we are able to be there most Mondays, as well as Tuesdays and Wednesdays, thanks to committed volunteers, and continue to be appreciated by Court users and staff. Often few cups are served but conversations are worthwhile, even with limited language!

We are most grateful for the valuable work Fiona Bououden did as CHAT Worker. We have now welcomed Eleanor Wood, who has forged even closer links with the Court staff. We are hoping for access to noticeboards so that our information can be more widely available for the individuals we miss, whose lives are often in turmoil. We refer to McKenzie friends, when appropriate, and to other agencies which can provide help in towns where asylum seekers are living—keeping this information up to date is not easy, so please let us know if you have any useful contacts! In conclusion I refer to a volunteer's quote;

***"It is gratifying to be there for people in their desperation. Although the practical help we can offer is very little, we do what we can."***

*Kathryn Larrad*

## Will Sutcliffe – Hosting Co-ordinator

### More than a few cans of food....

This has not been an easy year for the project. Whilst there is increasing awareness and sympathy amongst the British public of the impact of poverty, with food banks opening weekly and running at full capacity, we have found it increasingly difficult to identify new local households willing to open their doors to destitute asylum seekers.

The need has not diminished however. We continue to receive referrals on a weekly basis for asylum seekers made destitute following refusal of their asylum claims. We know however that, with support, a very significant proportion of these could eventually be granted leave to remain in the UK. **Of the 47 guests we have hosted over the past 5 years, at least 18 now have leave to remain and more are back on Home Office ('Section 4') support, awaiting a decision.** That is, 18 individuals now able to build a new life, contribute to our society – and pay taxes!

'J' from Syria for example. He was hosted for an extended period by a very wonderful couple in BD15, enduring several setbacks on the way with his legal case, before being granted refugee status in April last year. He has just opened his own hairdressing salon in Leeds!

We have been greatly encouraged that, following engagement with Destitution Concern Bradford\*, on 9<sup>th</sup> July Bradford Council followed a number of other UK Councils in passing (unanimously) a motion opposing the government's policy of using enforced destitution as a tool to force refused asylum seekers to leave the UK. In addition they recognized "*That the destitution of refused asylum seekers places increased pressure on the charities and communities that meet their most basic human needs*". .....**That is us!**

Whilst we believe our hosts are remarkable people, they insist that they are nothing exceptional, and that the benefits of 'welcoming the stranger' into their homes outweigh any inconveniences.

We long for more to join them.



*Will Sutcliffe*

\* Information about Destitution Concern Bradford can be found on their website: [www.destitutionconcernbradford.org](http://www.destitutionconcernbradford.org)

Destitution Concern Bradford

## Eithne Dodwell – Chair of McKenzie Friends

This has been a strange year for McKenzie Friends. Because of the hiatus in dispersals, and the success of our recruiting drive and training, we have, if anything, been short of work. We have been informed that dispersals will recommence soon, and will be kept updated by the council's New Arrivals Strategy group. Many of our cases have been out of area referrals, e.g. to accompany Asylum Seekers from Leeds or Sheffield to hearings at Phoenix House, others have involved long lasting cases or Fresh Claims.

We have been developing expertise in campaigning, helping to get one of our volunteers out of detention in Yarls' Wood and back to Bradford, where he and his family eventually gained leave to remain, as well as making a submission to the Home Affairs Select Committee's inquiry into Asylum.



We've been successful in obtaining legal support for several clients [see statistics on page 14] and are currently exploring ways to work more closely with local solicitors, who are struggling to continue Asylum work because of recent severe restrictions in legal Aid. This, as well as Welcome to Bradford - a scheme being

set up to welcome people dispersed by the Home Office to Bradford and to signpost them to essential services, along similar lines to the successful Leeds model, will hopefully reduce the waste of energy sometimes caused by desperate or frustrated clients working simultaneously with several different groups. We are also developing links to local translation agencies which we hope will reduce fees and increase effectiveness.

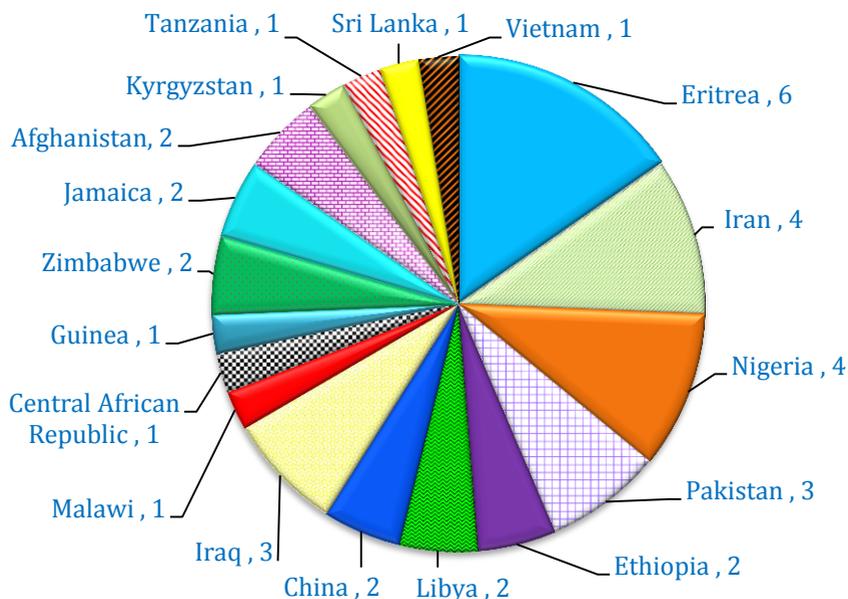
Several concerns continue:

- the plight of those who have been refused status, but cannot be returned to their countries of origin – for example Eritrea, Mali, Iran.
- problems surrounding Housing provision by G4S, particularly in Keighley.
- the disturbing lack of information concerning the fate of those taking Voluntary Return. This is particularly concerning in the light of the Government's recent campaign to urge migrants to return home.

We have worked closely with other local agencies, particularly in Bradford, Leeds and Keighley. Several of these have sent delegates to our in-house training; we are considering levying charges for this proportionate to income, but we are aware that many agencies are as strapped for cash as we are ourselves. We have received training from Refugee Action, NCADC, ReachOUT and a local solicitor and have increasing confidence in our growing partnership with court officials at Phoenix House.

## McKenzie Friends Statistics

Throughout the year we have had 21 McKenzie Friends volunteers working on 39 cases, with clients from a variety of countries;



Of these cases, 14 clients were accompanied to their hearing, 4 fresh claims were submitted, 9 individuals were given support in their appeals to the First Tier Tribunal/Upper Tier Tribunal and many were signposted on to other support organisations in the district. We successfully helped to find legal representation or advice for 8 clients and are delighted that this year 3 of those have gone on to be granted Leave to Remain. Sadly, we do not always know what happens to clients, but remain confident in the fact that any help and support we can offer is better than no help at all.

*For detailed statistics please contact Kezia Rooke, details on Page 18.*

## Roy Howarth – Treasurer

Once again I must begin by saying a huge ‘Thank you’ to all those individuals, churches and charitable groups who contribute so generously to our work. It is a constant source of encouragement to see the financial support which is given to BEACON to enable the organisation to continue its support of asylum seekers.

This year has been challenging financially as the effects of recession have been seen by us as well as by many other charities as funding bodies have smaller and smaller amounts of money to share between increasing numbers of applicants.

Earlier this year BEACON was facing a very bleak prospect. However, as always there were a number of people who rose to the challenge and made supreme efforts to raise funds. An outstanding example of this was the Sponsored Walk – now in its 4<sup>th</sup> year- the response was amazing! As you will see from the financial statement, a fantastic total was raised – our best so far!

People are also working hard behind the scenes to apply for funding from different organisations and these people also deserve our thanks for the many hours of work which go into making funding applications. We ask your prayers for the success of these applications in order to secure the future of our work.

Our Hosting project, McKenzie Friends and the Spotlight English Project continue to thrive. As you will have heard in the reports from these groups there have been a number of successes during this year.

At the moment it looks as if the difficulties will continue into the next financial year, however, each positive outcome gives us encouragement and strength to continue and I am sure that as always we can rely on the generosity of all who support the work of BEACON.



Thank you once again to all who give their generous support to BEACON's work.

*Roy Howarth*



## BEACON Annual Report for the year to 30<sup>th</sup> September 2013

# Accounts

INCOME			EXPENDITURE	
<b>BEACON General</b>			<b>BEACON General</b>	
Donations	Churches	3238	Salaries	13110
	Other (Gift Aid)	2145	Rent	5255
	Allen Lane	2500	Expenses	2412
	Rotary Club	250	Insurance	1055
	Lyndal Tree	7500	Printing	823
	Individuals	5527		
	Sponsored walk	3488		
<b>CHAT</b>			<b>CHAT</b>	
Donations	Individuals	470	Rent	800
	Church Urban Fund		Salaries	1229
	Near Neighbours		Expenses	32
	WY Meth District			
<b>SPOTLIGHT</b>			<b>SPOTLIGHT</b>	
	2.28	5000	Salaries	2838
			Expenses	1252
			Rent	1440
<b>HOSTING</b>			<b>HOSTING</b>	
Donations	Individuals	1460	Expenses	4540
<b>McKENZIE FRIENDS</b>			<b>McKENZIE FRIENDS</b>	
Donations		1000	Expenses	839
Expenditure over income		3047		
		35625		35625

### Balance Sheet

Income over Expenditure Brought Forward	22447	Cash at Bank	19390
Expenditure over Income for 2013	3047	Cash in Hand	10
	19400		19400

Above is the summary of the un-examined accounts for 2012-2013.  
Detailed accounts are available from the Treasurer.

## Contact Details

For all enquiries regarding BEACON's work, referrals or volunteering opportunities please contact Kezia Rooke, BEACON Co-ordinator:

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**Hosting Project:** host.beacon@yahoo.com  
07505 053149



**McKenzie Friends:** Eithne.dodwell@gmail.com  
07531 576330

***“For I was hungry  
and you gave me something to eat,  
I was thirsty  
and you gave me something to drink,  
I was a stranger  
and you invited me in.”***

***- Matthew 25:35***



[www.beaconbradford.org](http://www.beaconbradford.org)



Beacon Bradford



@BEACON\_Bradford

**“Welcome the Stranger”**

