



Reg. Charity Number 1119463

BEACON

Bradford Ecumenical Asylum Concern

Hosting McKenzie Friends Chat



Annual Report for
the Year to 30th
September 2014

'Welcome the Stranger'





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CHAIR OF BEACON EXECUTIVE REPORT

RITA ARMITAGE

I continue to be aware of how much we owe to so many people and offer a sincere word of thanks to individuals, churches, organisations and charitable trusts which offer financial support; volunteers who give generously of their time; employees who demonstrate commitment far beyond the responsibilities set out in their job descriptions.

It will never be easy to secure funding. Issues around 'Immigration' dominate the political debate and a common perception is that asylum seekers are economic migrants in disguise! With yet more stringent cuts in the pipe line even more voluntary sector organisations are helping those facing hardship. We are grateful for the generous response to requests for support, and are encouraged by successful funding bids to charitable trusts. Once again we held our annual sponsored **Walk for Justice**, during Refugee Week in June, undertaking the **10 mile walk** from **Bradford's Centenary Square** to the Home Office **Waterside Court Reporting Centre** in **Leeds**. We longed for relief from intense heat on one of the hottest days of the year, conscious of those for whom this walk is a regular necessity, come rain or shine.

Finally, a word of appreciation for our **employees: Eleanor** made a significant difference to the **CHAT** project during her year or so with us, developing both aspects of the work and managing the move to **Phoenix House** for the hospitality aspect.

Kezia left us in February. Sad to see her go, we acknowledged our gratitude for her contribution as our Coordinator. **Daniel** joined us in



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March and quickly established himself, impressing us with his deep commitment to the work of BEACON. Sadly, a heart rending family situation has led to he and his family seeking a new life in Turkey. We have now been joined by **Lizzie**, who has described herself as “*the new Daniel and Eleanor all-in-one!*” as the **CHAT and BEACON Coordinator** roles have now been combined. Early signs suggest this will be a positive move.

Looking back, this has been a year with many challenges and changes. However, we are confident as we look forward to celebrating our 10th Anniversary in 2015. We shall be in touch with details of our plans, in the meantime do keep in touch: visit our web site, contact us by email, find us on Facebook or follow us on Twitter!

Rita Armitage

For to be free is not merely to cast off one's chains, but to live in a way that respects & enhances the freedom of others.

- **Nelson Mandela**

BEACON COORDINATOR REPORT

LIZZIE LOWENSTEIN

Since I started in September 2014, I have been struck by the **dedication and generosity** of all those involved in BEACON, and the **warm, caring environment** this lends to our projects and events. Daniel's work during his time at BEACON meant a smooth handover and an easy transition for me into the combined role of CHAT and BEACON Coordinator. My time is now split between developing the CHAT Project and the responsibilities which the Coordinator post entails. We are excited to be in the initial planning stages of our **10th year anniversary**, which promises great opportunities for more awareness-raising, fundraising and generally a celebration of what BEACON has achieved so far.



Daniel with the Lord Mayor of Bradford, Cllr Mike Gibbons.

CHAT: CARE AND HOSPITALITY AT THORNBURY

CHAT Court is running well, with volunteers reporting a recent increase in the number of asylum seekers they meet. In 2013-2014 we provided refreshments, a listening ear and signposting to **over 50 asylum seekers** from countries as diverse as **Sri Lanka, Iran and the DRC**. We continue to foster strong relationships with the staff at Phoenix House, and thank them for their cooperation and support. We are currently **recruiting new volunteers** and hope to soon have a presence on **Thursday and Friday** too!

CHAT English Club has a new name! Formally known as the ‘Spotlight English Club’, this will draw closer ties with CHAT Court, as well as being a great name for a conversation club! The Club consists of a diverse group of learners from different backgrounds with a wide range of abilities. We have had participants from **Syria, Afghanistan, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Pakistan, India and Eastern Europe**. On average **10 learners** attend each week, although it has been as high as **15!** The group is strengthened by its diversity of cultures and abilities, bringing a supportive and welcoming atmosphere. A combination of guided conversation activities, structured language development exercises and games leads to **animated chatter on food, festivals, and of course the weather!** I should also pay tribute to the **long-term volunteers** who did a great job of keeping the Club going over the summer in the absence of a coordinator.



CHAT English Club bids a fond farewell to Eleanor in April 2014.

RIGHT TO REMAIN CONFERENCE REPORT

DANIEL ROSNER - PREVIOUS BEACON COORDINATOR

*Before leaving, Daniel represented BEACON at the **Right to Remain Conference in London** (6th September, 2014).*



Following their name change from NCADC to Right to Remain, the organisation hosted their annual conference at the Praxis Community Centre in East London. It was opened by **Frances Webber**, an immigration and human rights lawyer who

authored the book *Borderline Justice*. She first apologised to the audience, for talking about ‘the old days’: ***“In the old days, if you could get into this country, you were in. No matter how you arrived, once you were in, you could find work, study, or whatever you’d like.”*** She compared this to the present, when recently Isabella Acevedo was apprehended at her daughter’s wedding by immigration enforcement officers and placed in detention. She calls the current immigration environment ***“depraved indifference.”***

The second speaker was **Saira Grant**, (Legal policy director, Joint Council of the Welfare of Immigrants). Saira highlighted the precarious relationships between the Home Office and the judicial/law enforcement branches of government: ***“The Home Office doesn’t want judicial review of their decisions [...] because judges often overturn their decisions.”*** The police have also been less



cooperative than the Home Office wants in enforcing immigration law. As a result, the Home Office has coerced universities and colleges to become the fountainheads of enforcement. This was particularly poignant for me, as I recalled my wife being required to register with the police upon arrival here and notify them of any address changes, although her course-mates from Australia, Japan, and the United States did not.

The conference was a chance to hear about work being done to **improve the lives of migrants all over the UK** and it was great to see how the work of a grass-roots organisation such as **BEACON fits into a wider context.**

HOSTING PROJECT REPORT

WILL SUTCLIFFE - HOSTING PROJECT COORDINATOR



Through the **kindness and generosity** of our small group of host households, we have again provided a **home, food, advocacy** and – just as importantly – **friendship and support** this year to otherwise destitute men and women whilst they worked towards submitting fresh asylum claims. In the past couple of months 3 have done just that, and moved on to be housed and supported again by the Home Office, pending decisions on their cases.

The project remains very small however. At a recent get-together for the hosts, one couple said just how much they as a family with three young children have benefitted over the past 5 years as they have hosted a small succession of women from a number of countries. They also expressed amazement at how difficult it is for the project to find others willing to open their homes and their hearts.

We still urgently need people willing to host men. Perhaps understandably, we have always had more local households able to house women, but referrals for men are consistently much higher. If you think you might be willing to consider hosting, or know someone who may be interested, please contact **Will Sutcliffe** (details on page 14).

MCKENZIE FRIENDS REPORT

EITHNE DODWELL - CHAIR OF MCKENZIE FRIENDS



It has been an interesting year for McKenzie Friends. Political developments have increasingly affected our work in ways which confirm reports from other directions of the impact of austerity on those least able to cope. **The House of Commons Home Affairs Select Committee's** winter report on Asylum and Immigration, to which we sent a submission, reflected our concerns about the culture of disbelief operating throughout the Home Office, as well as the general delays and inefficiency of the whole asylum process. In Yorkshire, the absorption of the previous **Border Agency** into the **Home Office**, and its re-emergence as the **Border Force**, has been followed by increased delays at all stages of the administrative processes.

Most people know about the **cuts to legal aid**, which have severely affected asylum seekers. Less well known is the transfer of the contract in West Yorkshire to coordinate services for asylum seekers from the **Refugee Council** to **Migrant Help**, which took effect on 1st April 2014. The latter's role is considerably limited: face-to-face services have been reduced and replaced by call centres, the ability of which to help clients with limited or no English reading skills to

deal with their morass of letters and forms is at the very least questionable.

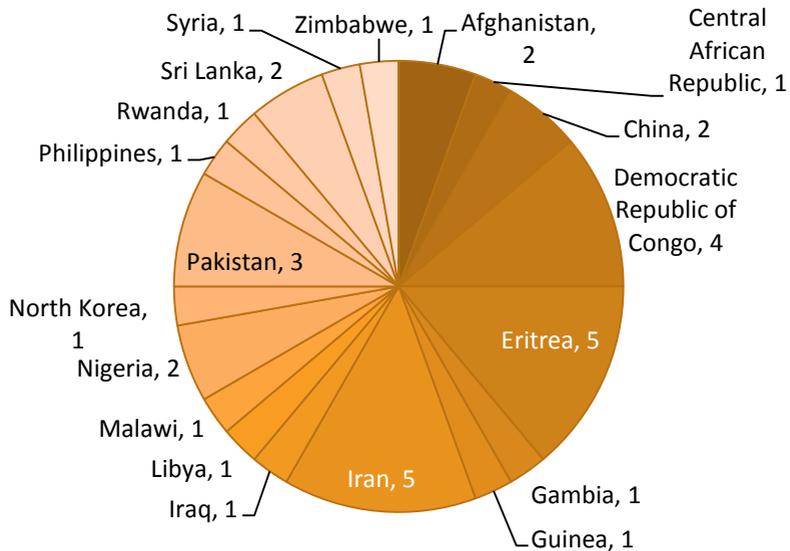
These developments have resulted in changes to the nature of our work: fewer new referrals and more clients concerned about nerve-racking waits for decisions and wanting to explore new avenues. On a more cheerful note, relations with the staff of the Tribunals at Phoenix House continue to be co-operative and friendly. Ordinary people continue to do the best they can in spite of the often hostile and inhuman systems in which they operate - repeated evidence of this is one of the joys of being a McKenzie Friend.

Our volunteer base continues to develop and change: early summer saw the sad and unexpected death of Lorna Whitely, whose commitment, hard work and knowledge of the ins and outs of the legal system was invaluable. Kevin Ritchie has also moved on and is now the Labour Councillor for Bramley, working for a civil society on a different stage. For a follow-up story about one of our clients who was forcibly returned go to One World Leeds:

<http://www.oneworldleeds.org/missing-my-friend/>

*In the cherry blossom's shade
there's no such thing
as a stranger.*
— Kobayashi Issa

MCKENZIE FRIENDS STATISTICS



Throughout the year we have seen **36 clients** from a wide range of countries, with more from Iran, Eritrea, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Pakistan. We received **20 referrals** for support with **fresh claims**, **15 requests** for accompaniment to **the First and Upper Tribunal**, **2 referrals** for **first claims or legacy cases** and **2 appeals** to the **Court of Appeals**.

We are delighted that **two of our clients have gone on to be granted leave to remain**, whilst **11** were referred to a **solicitor or another agency** and **4** were accompanied to **embassies**. Of the others, some moved, some didn't reply to calls, some we could not help further and some cases are on-going and the outcome is not known. As far as we know none of our clients have been returned to their country of

TREASURER'S REPORT

ROY HOWARTH

As always, I must first say a **heartfelt 'Thank you'** to all those **individuals, churches and charitable groups and trusts** who continue to offer financial support to the work of BEACON, including those who sponsored the ***Walk for Justice*** which raised £2,340. We are inspired and encouraged by so much generosity in a difficult financial climate.

The next financial year will again prove to be a challenge as the work and costs continue to grow. It is, therefore, essential that we secure long term funding as well as maintaining the generous support of donors, or the capital reserves will dwindle!

Let me conclude by thanking all who have supported the work of BEACON in any way throughout the year and ensured that – yet again – we have had the money to meet the needs of such a vulnerable group of people.

'Let mutual love continue. Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers for by doing that some have entertained angels without knowing it.'

Hebrews 13: 1



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ACCOUNTS

Income and Expenditure Account as at 30.09.14

INCOME			EXPENDITURE	
BEACON General			BEACON General	
Donations	Churches	3101	Salaries	9073
	Other (Gift Aid)	993	Rent	5100
	Lyndal Tree	5000	Expenses	2432
	Brelms Trust	3000	Insurance	277
	J Franklin	500	Printing	552
	Allen Lane	2500		
	Individuals	5355		
	Sponsored walk	2340		
CHAT COURT			CHAT COURT	
Donations	Individuals	300	Rent	90
	Comic Relief	250	Salaries	1188
	Churches	395	Expenses	254
CHAT SPOTLIGHT			CHAT SPOTLIGHT	
	Comic Relief	750	Salaries	3436
			Expenses	1363
			Rent	1405
HOSTING			HOSTING	
Donations	Individuals	360	Expenses	3709
	Souter Trust	2000	Inn Churches	800
	Inn Churches	1000		
McKENZIE FRIENDS			McKENZIE FRIENDS	
Donations	Individuals	220	Rent	900
	Lush	5000	Salaries	3700
	Hilden Trust	5000	Expenses	1196
			Income over Expenditure	2589
		<u>38064</u>		<u>38064</u>

Balance Sheet

Income over Expenditure Brought Forward	24445	Cash at Bank	26970
Income over Expenditure 2013-2014	2589	Cash in Hand	64
	<u>27034</u>		<u>27034</u>



CONTACT DETAILS

For all enquiries regarding BEACON’s work, referrals or volunteering opportunities please contact:

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'Welcome the Stranger'