



Welcome the Stranger

Annual Report

For the year to September 30th 2017

CONTENTS

Chair of BEACON report	1
BEACON Team Leader report	2
Hosting Project report	3
McKenzie Friends report	4
CHAT Phoenix House report	6
CHAT English Club report	7
Treasurer's report	8
Income and Expenditure Accounts as at 30.9.2017	9



CHAIR OF BEACON REPORT

As BEACON continues to ‘Welcome the Stranger’, it does so in challenging times. Recent terrorist attacks contribute to a climate of fear which can so easily spill over into acts of hostility towards the vulnerable people we seek to support.

Following the bomb attack at Parson’s Green earlier this year, Maurice Wren, Chief Executive of the Refugee Council, wrote:

“We cannot allow these deplorable events to be used as an excuse to turn our backs on vulnerable refugees, or to compromise our most cherished values of compassion, humanity and solidarity. This is a time for us all to stand together and face down those who would divide us. We cannot let hatred and fear win.”

Through BEACON’s projects we are helping to ensure that justice, compassion and concern for those seeking safety in our city win the day.

This has been a year of change for BEACON.

Farewell!

After three years, we wished our Team Leader, Lizzie Lowenstein, well as she moved on to a new post in June. BEACON is immensely grateful for her contribution, especially the way that she helped implement the recommendations of the 2016 organisational review. Lizzie was tirelessly committed to BEACON and the people we seek to serve. Before leaving, she raised £800 sponsorship for running the Hackney Half Marathon, which was donated to the Hosting Project to support destitute asylum seekers. After 8 years, Eithne Dodwell is retiring from the Board of Trustees. During this time, Eithne has been Chair of McKenzie Friends, contributing significantly to its

development. She has trained and supported a growing number of dedicated and competent volunteers. The Board has benefited greatly from her understanding of the asylum system and her stand for justice. We will miss her! But we’re pleased she will continue to be involved with McKenzie Friends.

Hello!

In July, we welcomed Katy Armitstead, our new Team Leader. BEACON has gained an experienced and enthusiastic worker, who is already drawing together our diverse projects and addressing our funding strategy. Alice Garrod took up the new post of CHAT Phoenix House Coordinator. We’re delighted that Alice’s skills are being put to good effect, building up and expanding the team of volunteers offering hospitality at Phoenix House. Soon we hope to welcome a McKenzie Friends Coordinator, thus completing the team that was recommended in our review. As you can imagine, our little office is now bursting at the seams. We are so pleased that during 2018 we will move, with Touchstone, into a new home with exciting new possibilities! As Bradford is home to over 800 asylum seekers, BEACON’s work will be in demand for the foreseeable future. I’d like to say an enormous thank you to our 60+ volunteers and all who have supported BEACON over the past year: praying for us, raising awareness of asylum seekers and refugees, raising money, walking for justice, opening your homes, pouring cups of tea, engaging in conversation, gathering information and accompanying people to the courts. And to the Board of Trustees: thank you for all your support through this first year and I look forward to another year of ‘welcoming the stranger’.

**Sarah Jemison
(Chair of Trustees)**

BEACON TEAM LEADER REPORT

I was thrilled to be appointed as Team Leader of BEACON in summer 2017. My predecessor, Lizzie Lowenstein, left BEACON in a strong position and paved the way for a smooth transition for me. Thank you Lizzie!

Having worked and volunteered with asylum seekers for some time, I have always admired the work of BEACON. My aim now is to see BEACON continue to thrive in reaching out to those who desperately need our support, and to develop our work to continuously meet the needs of those we serve. I'm confident we can continue to do this, with such a fantastic team of trustees, staff, volunteers and supporters working together to make it happen.

I've had a relatively busy first few months in post - getting ready for our AGM, recruiting a McKenzie Friends Coordinator, and outlining a funding strategy to name just a few things, as well as meeting lots of amazing and dedicated people!

Katy Armitstead
Team Leader



BEACON quiz night at Baildon Methodist church



Glass painting at our staff and trustees away day

HOSTING PROJECT REPORT



5 guests accommodated
for a total of more than **1,250**
nights 5 longer-term host
households, supported by
2 relief host households
Guests came from: **Zimbabwe,**
Eritrea, Ethiopia, Gambia
and Sudan

The statistics above are pretty remarkable but do not tell of the generosity and kindness of our hosts, or of the difficulties and frustrations faced by our guests, as they struggle to gather the evidence needed to submit fresh asylum claims – or of their battles with Home Office bureaucracy when they do.

There is an urgent need to develop the project. Having set up and coordinated the Hosting Project on a part-time, voluntary basis for many years, I am currently unable to expand the project alongside other demanding work roles which limit my time and capacity. We are currently looking for someone able to commit to 5-10 hours/week, to support me in my role on a flexible basis. Further information is available on our web site <https://beaconbradford.org/cansupport-beacons-hosting-project/>. We would love to hear from you!

Will Sutcliffe
Hosting Coordinator



Lizzie running the Hackney half marathon raising money for the Hosting Project



Walk for Justice 2017



Walk for Justice 2017

MCKENZIE FRIENDS REPORT

The most exciting developments this year for McKenzie Friends have been the distribution, and use for training, of our McKenzie Friends Volunteer Handbook, and the steps taken towards appointing our designated McKenzie Friends Coordinator, who will hopefully be in post by the end of the year.

We have had generous support in compiling the handbook from Right to Remain, and from the legal representative Phill Wilcox. Phill has helped us understand more about the crucial difference between legal advice, which we cannot as yet offer, and legal support, which is our core activity. Right to Remain's online Toolkit remains an invaluable reference source for anyone wanting to get to grips with the asylum system in the UK.

As I say every year, our asylum system continues to suffer from delays, and often mistakes, stemming in part from counter-productive austerity matters. The ongoing delays mean that we have had to close several times to new referrals. We increasingly find ourselves supporting clients who have very little documentary evidence to support their claims in coming to terms with the implications of being 'Appeal Rights Exhausted'. Warlords, rebel militias, corrupt officials to name a few, do not leave arrest warrants, or medical reports of the effects of their activities. Underground protest movements do not issue membership cards. It is very difficult for their victims to provide the evidence demanded by the tribunals. Supporting these victims is valuable work, but emotionally very demanding. Several times recently, referrals that seemed to be straightforward requests to accompany a client to a hearing have turned out to

be time-consuming Pandora's boxes. We continue to be inspired by the courage, optimism and strength of our clients in the face of the many obstacles that make it so difficult for them to build a new life for themselves, and become meaningful contributors to our society. We are also indebted to our volunteers, who work tirelessly to seek justice for those we support.

Eithne Dodwell
Chair of McKenzie Friends

At 30th September 2017 we had:

- 28** open cases
- 29** new referrals
- 23** cases carried over from last year
- 28** different countries

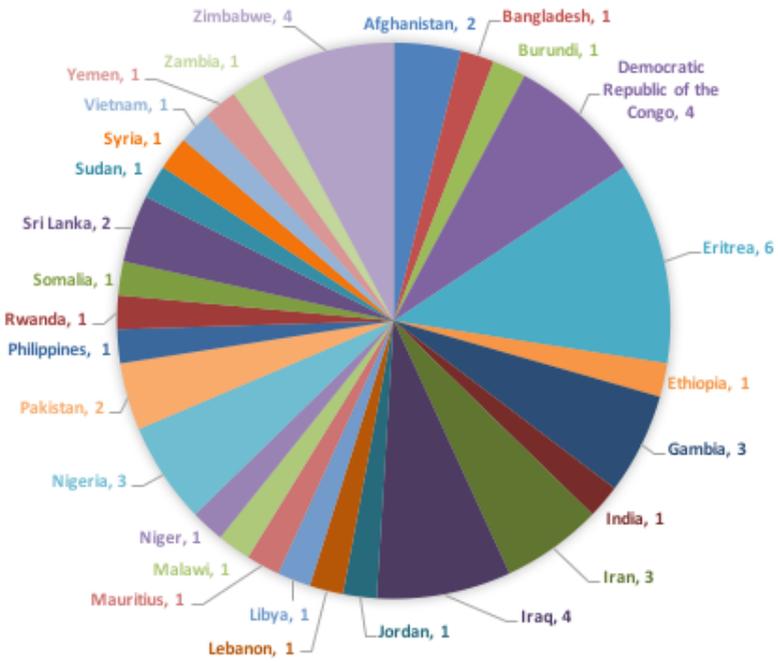
Known outcomes for our clients are as follows:

- 5** were granted leave to remain
- 17** found a solicitor or other legal support
- 28** cases are carrying over into next year

“In the current climate, with increasing numbers of asylum seekers facing the legal system without legal representation, the need for the work of McKenzie Friends becomes ever more valuable. Even in cases where a client has legal representation, the amount of time lawyers can spend on each case is very limited. A McKenzie Friend may well spend longer with a client than a lawyer ever can, and spend valuable time in helping them prepare for the legal process. In a case where a client has a lawyer, this work is invaluable in supporting that representative and making best use of time.

I have really enjoyed working with BEACON’s McKenzie Friends project and believe that this is both valuable and important work. I have been very impressed by the commitment shown by McKenzie Friends’ in assisting vulnerable people to access the legal process with support and dignity.”

Phill Wilcox,
Manuel Bravo immigration caseworker



CHAT PHOENIX HOUSE REPORT



CHAT Phoenix House underwent a structural change in April this year as I took on the new role of Project Coordinator. While Heather, already giving so much time to BEACON in other roles, had been doing an excellent job ensuring that everything continued to run smoothly at Phoenix House, it was time for the BEACON staff team to grow and so I was welcomed as the newest addition, soon to be followed by our new Team Leader, Katy.

Since then, it has been a true pleasure becoming part of the CHAT project and BEACON as a whole. I have thoroughly enjoyed getting to know such a dedicated and kind team of volunteers so committed to supporting those seeking sanctuary here. By offering their time and compassion to ensure a brief moment of welcome during an otherwise distressing experience, they graciously remind those waiting for their asylum hearings that their humanity is valued here and now.

A huge thank you must be said to the CHAT volunteers for their dedication to the project, including those who have been with us since the beginning and those who have joined us throughout this year. In total, we have spoken to 342 asylum seekers as well as welcomed many other people attending Phoenix House for other reasons, including family reunion

Since 1st October 2016, we have been at Phoenix House on **112 mornings** and managed to serve **2146 hot drinks**, a **30% increase** on last year! The service is free to all, although some choose to donate, for which we are very grateful. In the past year, we have received **£759.44 in donations**. Thank you!

cases and spouse visa appeals. The people we've spoken to have originated from over 40 different countries and have travelled on the day from as far as Leicester, Newcastle and Blackpool. Our volunteers have not only provided them with a hot drink, but have also been able to signpost those in need to relevant services in the areas from which they have travelled.

We are often told that our presence at the tribunal centre makes a considerable difference to the atmosphere in the waiting room, and the grateful comments and smiles we receive from appellants, their companions, support workers and Phoenix House staff reassure us that our service continues to be appreciated by many.

Alice Garrod
CHAT Phoenix House Coordinator

"It's wonderful to be able to support people at such an anxiety-filled time. The people we meet are inspiring and there is never a day at Phoenix House without an interesting conversation."

CHAT Phoenix House volunteer

CHAT ENGLISH CLUB REPORT

CHAT English Club has continued to develop in 2016-2017. Students are welcomed into a safe, supportive, friendly environment each week, to converse with skilled volunteers and with each other.

We usually open with a relaxed chat and refreshments, before moving on to the theme of the day. We aim to enable students to become more confident in speaking English, improving fluency and accuracy, and endeavour to work with wherever a person's starting point is. We often have complete beginners, through to those with a reasonably good command of English.

One of our strongest students has now transitioned into a volunteering capacity. Having gained Leave to Remain and now working in two jobs, he still comes to CHAT on his morning off and does a fine job supporting other learners. The whole team of volunteers goes from strength to strength, responding with skill, agility and sensitivity to the very wide range of students' language needs and to the ever-changing group of attendees.

When attendance in the group is steady, we have organised several trips in order to broaden students' awareness of pleasant spots to visit locally – chatting and learning in English as we go. This year, there have been visits to Saltaire, local parks, an art gallery and to Bradford cathedral. We also recently had an evening trip to Theatre in the Mill, to see a play called 'Free to Stay', which led to lively discussion afterwards. The new theatre director there had kindly agreed to offer complementary tickets, in order to encourage a new audience. Students ate together at a local restaurant beforehand; a rare treat for many, having the opportunity to share this social experience.

Understandably, our student body is a changeable one, and we expect that people will come and go because of uncertainty and

change in their personal circumstances. We are constantly seeking students' opinions and ideas for the content of CHAT sessions, and respond to requests for a particular focus. Student requests have focused on understanding directions, using the phone, and going to the doctor. More formally collated feedback from students has been invariably positive. We have a lot of laughs, and students also say they appreciate the way we are able to work in small groups each with a volunteer, so they have plenty of opportunity to learn from small mistakes, and to practise in a safe, comfortable setting.

Mandy Oates
CHAT English Club Coordinator

In the last year, we have registered **58 students** from **18 different** countries. Most of our students have originated from Iran (**27%**), followed by **Sudan, Eritrea, DCR** and **Iraq**. Most are asylum seekers. **Approximately 25% have Leave to Remain, or gain this while registered with us. 10% are EU nationals.**



CHAT English Club students visit Lister Park

TREASURER'S REPORT

At the time of the finalisation of last year's accounts, we had just put into place the necessary changes to our financial processes.

A year on, I am happy to report that our new in-house team, our external accountants and our Treasurer are working well together and operate an effective financial system. We have a new accounting system as well as budgeting and financial reporting procedures.

This coupled with our target of a level of reserves approximately equal to one year's expenditure means that we have a solid base from which to press forward to consolidate and expand our services to the benefit of this vulnerable section of society.

Thanks to all who continue to support us, both financially and in many other ways.

Roland Clark
Treasurer

CHAT English Club students enjoy a pre-theatre meal



CHAT English Club Christmas party



INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNTS AS AT 30.9.2017

INCOME			EXPENDITURE	
Beacon General			Beacon General	
Churches		8240	Office costs	1481
Individuals		5296	Rent	5922
Others		6186	Salaries	12902
Sponsored Walk		1341	Training	250
Trusts	GM Charitable	5503	Publicity and	
	Lyndal Tree	6000	Fundraising	1090
	Bfd Diocesan CSA	3000	Insurance	130
	W Yorks Meth	5000	Subscriptions	666
			Donations	110
			Other	1137
Total Beacon General Income		40565	Total Beacon General Expenditure	23688
			CHAT English Club	
			phone	37
			Total Salaries	2674
			Rent	1020
			Insurance	130
			Total CHAT English Club Expenditure	3861
			CHAT Phoenix House	
CHAT Phoenix House			phone	57
Individuals		816	Expenses	254
			Salaries	1208
			Insurance	130
			Total CHAT Phoenix House Expenditure	1649
			Hosting	
Hosting			phone	119
Individuals		992	expenses	230
			Guest allowance	2745
			bus passes	874
			rent	263
			Insurance	130
			Total Hosting Expenditure	4361
			McKenzie Friends	
McKenzie Friends			phone	98
Individuals		7020	Volunteer expenses	34
Other		211	Other	401
			Salaries	3391
			Rent	343
			Insurance	130
Total McKenzie Friends Income		7231	Total McKenzie Friends Expenditure	4397
Total Income		49604	Total Expenditure	37956

Balance brought forward

27618

Balance carried forward

39266



Welcome the Stranger

Contact us:

BEACON Office

c/o Touchstone, 32 Merton Road,
Bradford, BD7 1REE

E: beacon@beaconbradford.org

T: 01274 727525

F: 01274 395324

Hosting

E: hosting@beaconbradford.org

T: 07505 053149

McKenzie Friends

E: [c/o beacon@beaconbradford.org](mailto:c/o_beacon@beaconbradford.org)

T: 07531 576330

CHAT Phoenix House

E: chatph@beaconbradford.org

T: 07506 211756

CHAT English Club

E: chat@beaconbradford.org

T: 07534 248295

Twitter: @BEACON_Bradford

Facebook: Beacon32

www.beaconbradford.org