



Welcome the Stranger

Annual Report

For the year to 30th September 2018

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CHAIR OF TRUSTEES REPORT

‘Hospitality or Hostility?’

As BEACON seeks to offer hospitality, we do so in the context of a ‘hostile environment’.

Quoting Thangam Debbonaire MP, chair of the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Refugees:

“With 65 million displaced worldwide, honouring our commitments to refugees is essential. There is a global refugee crisis. The UK has a legal obligation under international law to take our fair share. However, we take a tiny number and to read how many experience poverty and destitution instead of the welcome they deserve and are entitled to is an awful statement about who we are as a country.”

Alongside this statement, there are those who would affirm that our country has a compassionate side. BEACON can attest to this for we know that there are many within our churches, other faith communities and in the larger community who give us generous support, through their time and talents.

Home Office statistics, published in July, show that over the past year:

- the number of people granted asylum in the UK has dropped by over a quarter
- more than a third of asylum applications that receive a negative initial decision are overturned on appeal
- the number of asylum seekers waiting longer than the government’s six-month target for a decision has risen by 76% since 2016

Some of the people who make up these statistics are well known to us at BEACON. Our volunteers and staff meet them in the ‘immigration and asylum hearing centre’ at Phoenix House, Thornbury, in the CHAT English Club at Touchstone and through our McKenzie Friends, when they come seeking

support at the point of an asylum appeal or after a refusal. Some who are destitute are given accommodation through our Hosting project, in the homes of volunteer hosts.

“Comings”

- We welcomed Revd. Andrew Howorth to the Board of Trustees. Andrew co-ordinates the Bradford University’s Interfaith Chaplaincy team and has strengthened the board both with his human resources experience and skill, and his commitment to friendship and hospitality
- We appointed our first McKenzie Friends Co-ordinator, Audrey Smith, who with a wealth of knowledge and experience, has enabled us to recruit and train more volunteers and accept more referrals
- In June, we moved with Touchstone into a new building. Katy, our Team Leader, says, ‘We are thrilled with our new working space and the facilities available’

“and Goings”

- Sadly, in December, Mandy, our CHAT English Club Co-ordinator, will leave her post after two and a half years. BEACON has been blessed with Mandy’s energy, creativity and commitment to the club. Conversation and friendship has been developed through so many interesting experiences: visits to Saltaire and Haworth, theatre trips, video interviews and meals out. Thank you, Mandy.

As you read the project reports, I trust you will appreciate the contribution BEACON is making to asylum seekers in our area.

Thank you to our faithful band of dedicated volunteers, our staff team and Trustees, all so often “going the extra mile.”

Sarah Jemison
Chair of Trustees

TEAM LEADER REPORT

This year has been a year of change, growth and development for BEACON.

BEACON has consolidated the work of its 4 projects and has grown its staff team. We now have a full team of Project Coordinators who have developed the activities of each project and recruited more volunteers. This has increased our capacity and ability to meet the ever-present need for our services in Bradford.

In June, we moved premises along with Touchstone just around the corner from our old office on Merton Road to a fantastic new building on Easby Road, providing better facilities for our activities and for the use of our staff, volunteers and service users. Our annual Walk for Justice during Refugee Week was a great success, raising much-needed funds for our work and we are looking forward to an upcoming 'jazz night', the proceeds of which will go directly towards the work of the McKenzie Friends project.

In the coming year, we hope to build on the strong foundations each Project Coordinator has put in place and to further grow and develop our work in line with the needs of those we seek to support. We do so in an ever-present context of hostility towards those seeking asylum, which BEACON seeks to counteract through the ethos which runs through all of our work as we strive to 'welcome the strangers' who find themselves in Bradford and the surrounding areas.

Katy Armitstead
Team Leader



Goodbye Merton Road!



Hello Easby Road!

HOSTING PROJECT REPORT



5 guests accommodated
for a total of more than **1,100**
nights, 5 longer-term host
households, supported by
2 relief host households
Guests came from: **Iran ,**
Zimbabwe, Eritrea, The
Gambia and Sudan

As the project celebrates its 10th anniversary this October, it is good to reflect again on the amazing generosity of our wonderful host households. One has hosted 11 guests in this time - the most recent one for over 2 years.

It is very good to report that a new host, with much experience of hosting in another city, recently joined the project and is willing to host two men. This is a huge help, as those able to accommodate men have been difficult to find over the years.

The mention above of a 2-year stay indicates the ongoing intense frustrations that our guests experience with the legal process, and in particular, mistakes, inefficiencies and confusion from the Home Office.

It has been wonderful to be able to welcome Paul Hubert who, also in a voluntary capacity, will be helping me as we endeavour to expand the project.



End of the Walk for Justice 2018

We continue to seek more hosts – in particular those able to take men. Information for anyone interested in finding out more about hosting is available on our web site: <https://beaconbradford.org/projects/hosting/>

Get in touch to find out more!

Will Sutcliffe
Hosting Coordinator

“Hosting has been a very positive experience for us. We feel very blessed for having our guest. She was always very gracious and appreciative. She challenged us in a nice way and we all grew in love and understanding.”

BEACON hosts on their experiences of hosting

MCKENZIE FRIENDS REPORT

It has been a rewarding 9 months since I started working at BEACON. I feel privileged to be working with such highly motivated, compassionate volunteers, who get the job done.

The McKenzie Friends are an inspiration and even more so in the prevailing 'hostile environment'. As Eithne Dodwell, former Chair of McKenzie Friends has reiterated in previous years, things are not improving for people seeking sanctuary. What the McKenzie Friends offer is unique - supporting people who cannot access legal representation but are desperate to 'regularise', people who have built lives in the UK and see it as their home, or for many, faced years of destitution unable to return and unable to settle. The McKenzie Friends support these people, helping them to try and find a way forward, which takes time and endurance, which they have in abundance.

We have recruited four new dedicated volunteers who undertook our comprehensive McKenzie Friends training programme, which was also attended by 8 other people including individuals from other organisations supporting asylum seekers across the sector in Bradford. Refugee Action also provided our volunteers with Fresh Claims training, to ensure that the support we offer is up-to-date and meaningful. Feedback was very positive from both training sessions.

In order to develop the service and find out how we can further support our clients, we plan to undertake a review of our work in the coming months. We also hope to build capacity, developing new links and strengthening partnerships with local organisations who provide support and advice to asylum seekers. .

Audrey Smith
McKenzie Friends Coordinator

This year, McKenzie Friends supported:

55 individuals
30 of these were new referrals
25 were cases carried over from last year

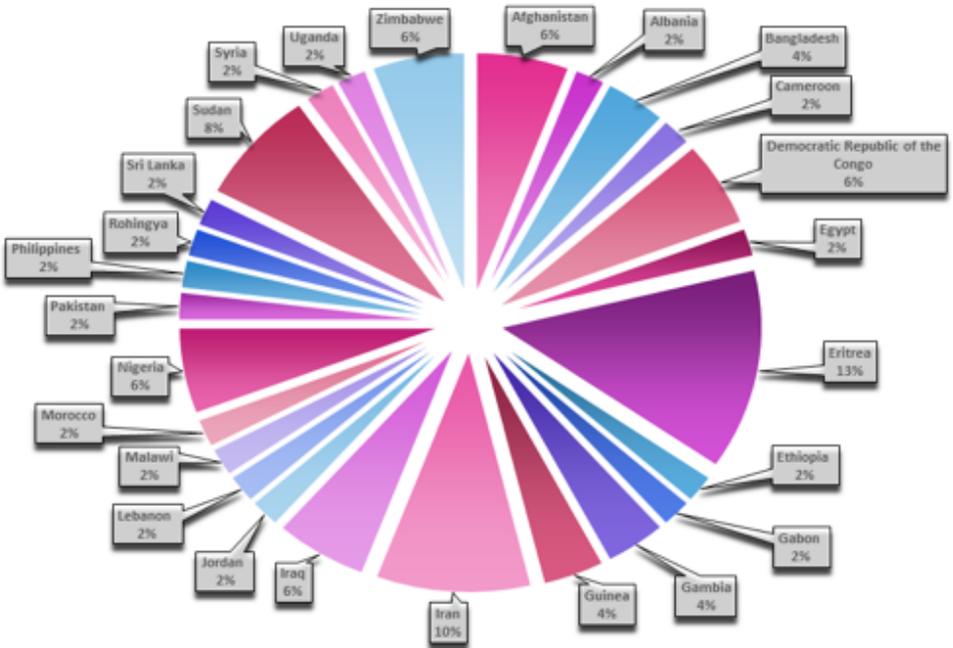
The people we supported came from
28 different countries of origin

Known positive outcomes for our clients this year:

6 were granted leave to remain
20 found a solicitor or other legal support
31 cases are carrying over into next year

"I am pleased and grateful for all the help and support that all of you gave me. I wouldn't do this journey without people like you by my side. I can't thank you enough for being there in my time of need. From the bottom of my heart, a big thank you."

Individual supported by McKenzie Friends



CHAT PHOENIX HOUSE REPORT



This was another great year for the CHAT Phoenix House project as we continued to create a more welcoming and comfortable environment for asylum seekers and others anxiously waiting for hearings at the Bradford immigration and asylum tribunal centre, otherwise known as Phoenix House.

“Welcome” is at the heart of BEACON’s work and we hope that by providing a hot drink, a listening ear and a friendly face, we are able to alleviate at least some of the feelings of distress and apprehension about the future experienced by those we support. Furthermore, thanks to generous donations from volunteers, our children’s box full of colouring materials and books has grown, enabling us to support even the youngest of attendees to the centre and their parents who struggle to keep them entertained as they wait.

We have had the privilege of meeting people from a host of different countries, a hot drink and a biscuit allowing us to connect both with fluent English speakers as well as those who are still struggling to learn. Most of the people we meet have travelled from cities in Yorkshire, however, some have come from as far as London, Bristol and Glasgow. Even more concerning for us is when we meet people from rural locations where little support and hostile communities can leave them alone and isolated. We always try to provide signposting information for supportive groups and organisations who may be able to help such people, but these are much more difficult to access in small towns. We strive to continuously

Since 1st October 2017, our friendly team of dedicated volunteers served over **2,000 hot drinks** over **129 mornings** during the year! We are proud to have welcomed **over 750 groups and individuals** with cases to be heard, including **315 asylum seekers**. We have had the privilege of meeting people from **67 different countries** who had travelled from **55 different places across the country**

develop and improve our resources in order to help people from different areas, frequently adding to and updating our bank of signposting information.

Of course, the project would not exist without the commitment and hard work of our volunteers, to whom we are especially grateful. This year we have welcomed five new volunteers to our team which now stands at fifteen. With a larger team, we have been able to extend our service to include Thursdays on nine weeks this year and hope to continue operating four days per week for most of next year.

A special thank you must also be extended to the staff at Phoenix House who welcome us and our project and continue to support us with their kind donations.

Alice Garrod
CHAT Phoenix House Coordinator

“Your service is certainly a thoughtful one and very much appreciated by those who are often extremely nervous about attending a hearing. A hot drink, a biscuit and a chat is a great way to settle nerves. You are to be commended for your efforts.”

Bradford social worker

CHAT ENGLISH CLUB REPORT

CHAT English Club has gone from strength to strength over the last year, continuing to provide a welcoming and friendly environment each week to facilitate students to become more confident in speaking English, whilst improving fluency and accuracy.

Themes have been wide-ranging, and as always, we aim to support individuals from their unique starting point.

"I have learnt so many things. Whatever level you are at, you are talking with people in the right group. That helps us learn more."

CHAT English Club student

Skilled, dedicated, reliable volunteers are, as ever, what makes the whole project work. As two long serving members John and Lisa now take a break, we welcome Pratima and Alan to a great team.

"For me, coming to the class is a weekly reminder of the power of love and compassion - we meet people with amazing strengths and we share laughter."

CHAT English Club volunteer

Many students particularly thanked us for keeping the class running through the summer holidays, which can be a thin time for social contact.

We have had some lovely trips this year, to Haworth, Saltaire and the National Science and Media Museum cinema, and had visits from a pharmacist and our community police officer, with whom students have had in-depth and insightful conversations.

Just two students, as far as we know, have been given Leave to Remain during the course of the year. Most are living with great uncertainty as

sanctuary seekers and speak of their CHAT class as a place where they can feel OK, living in the moment.

"We have a wonderful time. It makes me feel part of something - someone else is thinking about me and wants to help me."

CHAT English Club student

We celebrate where we can: educational successes; a better place to live; a driving theory test passed; a new baby.

Two mature students who have lived in Bradford for decades have taken a big step to further their integration and improve their English, by becoming regulars at the class - a positive indicator of community cohesion.

Mandy Oates
CHAT English Club Coordinator

In the last year, we have registered **43 students** from **15 different countries**. **Iran is the most common country of origin (30%), followed by Sudan, Afghanistan, Iraq, Pakistan and Egypt.** Most students are asylum seekers. **Approximately 25% have Leave to Remain, or gain this while registered with us. 9% are EU nationals. The number of women this year has risen to 30%**



CHAT English Club students and volunteers enjoy a trip out to Haworth

TREASURER'S REPORT

At BEACON, we look forward to the day when there is no longer a need for us to exist. We all hope and pray that that day comes soon, but, in the light of current national trends, we know we need to continue to run an efficient and effective charity.

We run a tight ship and are constantly looking for funding, and we are most grateful to every person and organisation that helps.

We have had a year where we have covered the cost of service provision but also managed to consolidate reserves to cover contingencies and provide for further expansion of our service.

Our total receipts for the year were £64,856

Net receipts for the year were £18,676

Net receipts after transfers between funds comprised £1484 in unrestricted funds and £17192 in restricted funds

I would like to thank all my colleagues for their assistance in maintaining our financial systems but especially Amanda Labbett (BEACON Administrative Assistant) who works tirelessly on the maintenance of our controls and financial records.

**Roland Clark
Treasurer**

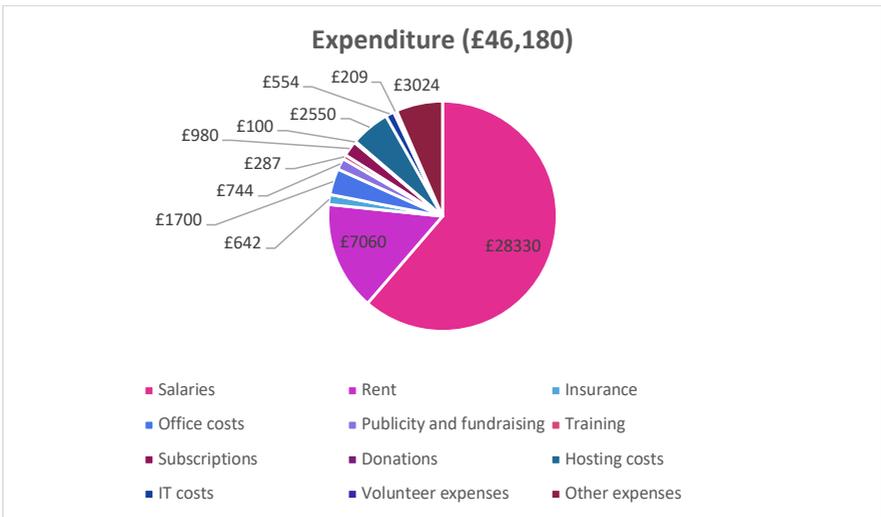
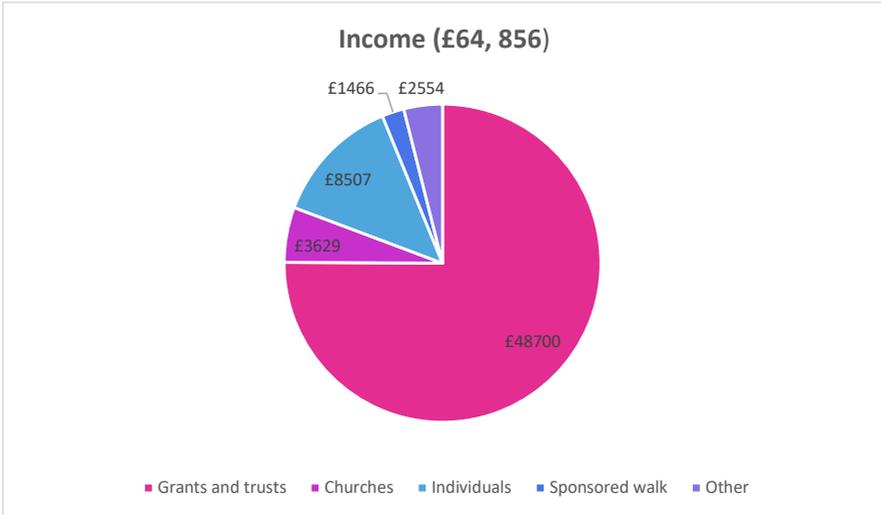


The first CHAT English Club at Easby Road



BEACON at the 2018 Refugee Week finale

INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNTS AS AT 30/09/2018



Net receipts £18,676
 Balance brought forward £39,266
 Balance carried forward £57,942
 A full set of examined accounts is available on request



Welcome the Stranger

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