



*Welcome the Stranger*

# Annual Report

For the year to 30th September 2019

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# CHAIR OF TRUSTEES REPORT

## Welcome and Work

**'Where there is no vision there is no hope!'**  
(George Washington Carver 1864-1943)

**'Where there is no vision the people perish.'**  
(Proverbs 29)

BEACON has continued to bring hope to many of the asylum seekers in our area who have experienced seemingly hopeless situations. Our vision, the foundation on which we build all our work, is that the Bradford district becomes a hospitable community where asylum seekers and refugees are welcome, enjoy access to justice and fair treatment and are supported on their journey to independence and integration.

## Welcome

 During 2019, through the government's dispersal system, Bradford has been home to over 900 asylum seekers, most receiving accommodation and subsistence support, but a significant number then become ineligible for accommodation and support. They become destitute – with no place to call home. BEACON's Hosting **Project** seeks to offer welcome and hope.

 In May 2019, our **McKenzie Friends** clients were able to access our first legal advice surgery where a partner legal caseworker was able to meet our clients and offer advice. Already this has proved an incredible asset, resulting in positive decisions on fresh asylum claims. A sign of hope!

 The process of attending immigration & asylum court hearings is stressful – **CHAT Phoenix House** volunteers provide a friendly face at the welcoming tea trolley!

## Work

 People, seeking safety in the UK, come with a wide variety of experience and skills. They wish to contribute to the country that will become their home. They want the dignity of work and pride in being able to support their families. In supporting them, BEACON, joined the 'Lift the Ban' coalition to raise awareness of the current situation where people seeking sanctuary in the UK are effectively banned from working and to request that the government grants asylum seekers the right to work after six months of having lodged an asylum claim.

 To be fully part of a community, we need to be able to communicate – to understand and to be understood. Every Wednesday morning, **CHAT English Club**, welcomes people to develop their English language skills and make friends.

I hope you're inspired by the work represented in the following more detailed project and financial reports.

Through the hard work of BEACON's amazing band of volunteers, staff and trustees, we continue to bring hope. Thank you to all who have shared our vision and supported BEACON over the past year.

**Sarah Jemison**  
Chair of Trustees

*"It's hard to describe in words the help which BEACON offered me. It played a vital role in my life. BEACON acted as a shelter. I felt like being a family member."*

**A from India, a former hosted guest**



# TEAM LEADER REPORT

## **Another year has passed, and BEACON continues to thrive. It's been an exciting year with lots of highlights throughout the year.**

In November, we held an Open Evening alongside our AGM and were pleased to see new faces interested in engaging with our work. In the same month, we also held a 'jazz night' raising much-needed funds for our McKenzie Friends project and were pleased to attend a 'Faiths in Action' event where we came together with other faith groups across the city to network and offer mutual support.

In December, I was thrilled to speak as a panel member alongside local activists and the esteemed Professor of Peace Studies, Paul Rogers, at an event hosted by Global Justice Bradford in December on the theme of the Hostile Environment: a global justice issue. In the same month, we sadly also said goodbye to staff members Alice Garrod and Mandy Oates but were pleased to welcome Finn McKay to BEACON in January as CHAT English Club Coordinator. Finn then subsequently took up the post of CHAT Phoenix House Coordinator in March. Finn's friendly demeanour and passion for justice have been an asset to our staff team.

Following a strategic review of the McKenzie Friends project and a volunteer 'away day', in May we set up a partnership with IBSA Legal who now hold monthly legal advice sessions for our clients. This has greatly enhanced the quality of support we can offer and given renewed focus to the project. We're thrilled to see the fruits of this partnership with clients being taken on by IBSA Legal and being granted Leave to Remain in the UK.

June saw us thrust into the limelight as our 'Walk for Work' event received live coverage from BBC Radio Leeds and Bradford Community Broadcasting radio station. Our annual sponsored walk was linked with the national award-winning Lift the Ban campaign calling for an end to the ban on the right to work for asylum seekers. The walk was also featured on the Sunday Politics Yorkshire and Lincolnshire Show where the issue was debated by a panel of MPs and an 'expert by experience'.

In July, staff and trustees took some time out to pause and reflect on our work together in the peaceful surroundings of Guiseley and in August, we thanked our volunteers with a day out in the delightful market town of Skipton, where we wandered along the canal and around the town and enjoyed lunch in a local café. It was an enjoyable day, despite the rain which we refused to let dampen our spirits!

As ever, we are indebted to our wonderful volunteers, without whom the work BEACON does would not be possible, as well as our funders and donors whose generosity and trust enable us to keep our vision and our mission growing. Our wonderful trustees work hard behind the scenes, providing governance and strategic direction to BEACON and our fantastic team of staff work tirelessly to support our volunteers and ensure our operations run smoothly. We would also like to thank Touchstone for their continued hospitality in hosting us at their wonderful centre at Easby Road.

**Katy Armitstead**  
Team Leader



The launch of the Walk for Work, June 2019



BEACON Team Leader, Katy Armitstead, joins a panel of speakers at The Hostile Environment: a global justice issue event, December 2018

# HOSTING PROJECT REPORT



**8 guests accommodated**  
for a total of just under **900**  
**nights! 7 longer-term host**  
**households** Guests came from:  
**Iran , Zimbabwe, Eritrea,**  
**The Gambia, Sudan and**  
**Somalia**

**Once again this has been a year of both immense joys and intense challenges.**

## Joys

 M from Eritrea, hosted for 12 months in 2016 and 2017, at last received Leave to Remain in the UK and, quite wonderfully, was able to be joined a few months later by her two young daughters who she had not seen for six years.

 S from Iran, hosted for 13 months in 2017 and 2018, also received Leave to Remain in the UK. He had wasted no time and attended full-time vocational classes whilst he was hosted by BEACON.

 A from India, hosted for 4 months in 2015, received Leave to Remain and has been joined by her two teenage daughters, having been separated for more than 5 years.

 R from Zimbabwe also received Leave to Remain. She had been hosted for over two and half years between 2016 and 2018, whilst bearing with every possible delay and frustration with her legal case, as well

as a violent racist attack which left her with lasting injuries.

 Our wonderful hosts! Currently a small but very diverse group: a retired couple, a young family, two single women and two clergy.

 Three former host households, who each had to withdraw from hosting due to house and family changes, are planning to return in the coming year!

## Challenges

 The current 5-month delay between our guests booking their appointments to submit fresh asylum claims and appointments being given. This, when they have already battled for years in some cases to find legal representation and then gather the evidence needed for their claims.

 Ongoing inefficiencies in the asylum system which hinder the progress of already traumatised individuals.

To end on a more positive note, we recently received the following lovely quote from a former guest:

***"BEACON came to pick me up and took me to a house owned by a lovely lady who is now like a sister and a best friend to me. I was given money each week and a travel pass to go to any appointment I had to go to. I felt safe in the house. If it was not for BEACON, I would have been on the street and possibly going through re-trafficking."***

**N from Nigeria, hosted by BEACON's Hosting Project**

# MCKENZIE FRIENDS REPORT

**Once again, the project has been delivered this year by a fantastic team of volunteers who have supported 63 clients over the year.**

The outcomes known to us are highlighted below. Unfortunately, we see the situations faced by many of our clients getting worse as they are often destitute and unable to work. This leaves them vulnerable to exploitation and negatively impacts on mental health. This highlights the clear continued need for our service, to ensure we support people to access legal representation and move out of destitution.

In November we held a fundraising ‘jazz night’ at Glyde House, thanks to volunteer Les and his fellow band members at The Band Upstairs. A big thank you to our volunteers, their friends and family and members of the public who supported the evening; we raised over £600 towards the project.

This year, we were sad to say goodbye to two long-standing volunteers and former BEACON trustees – Joe Batt and Eithne Dodwell. We thank them for all their contributions both to BEACON and the work of McKenzie Friends over the years.

As a result of a strategic review and feedback from the away day, we have developed the service we offer, forming a partnership with a local law firm, IBSA Legal, to provide monthly sessions for our clients to receive high-quality legal advice. The results so far are promising; to date we have seen success with 4 individuals and 5 more cases have been taken on by IBSA Legal to prepare fresh asylum claims under Legal Aid.

In order to better support volunteers to signpost clients, we have endeavoured to do more partnership work this year, inviting people from different services supporting asylum seekers to our case review meetings to better equip volunteers to signpost clients to other services to meet the range of needs faced by those seeking asylum. We have also worked closely with partner agencies via Destitution Concern Bradford to ensure those we work with are supported to maximum effect. Another highlight this year has been the provision of excellent training for our volunteers, delivered for us by the Migrant Law Project courtesy of Islington Law Centre. Topics covered this year have included Immigration detention, Dublin III removals and Age assessments in January 2019 and Applying for Exceptional Case Funding and understanding judicial review in the context of immigration.

## **Known positive outcomes for our clients this year:**

-  **5** were granted Leave to Remain in the UK
-  **10** were accompanied to appeal hearings or Home Office interviews
-  **20** found a solicitor or other legal support
-  **5** are currently awaiting decisions on fresh asylum claims



*“Three years ago, we didn’t have a solicitor. McKenzie Friends helped us in lots of ways – volunteer Bob found us a solicitor who helped us to submit a new asylum claim. We waited more than 1.5 years for a decision. Bob then helped us to meet Ruth Tucknott. Ruth helped us to finally get a decision from the Home Office and now we have Leave to Remain in the UK. I can say Ruth is the most genuine and most helpful legal advisor. Bob and Ruth both helped us when we were so worried. I haven’t got words to explain how much they helped us. Thank you”*

C from Sri Lanka supported by McKenzie Friends

*I have supported three clients who have received a consultation with Ruth Tucknott from IBSA Legal. The following brief summaries illustrate a range of outcomes.*



*After a meeting with a family from Sri Lanka, who had been awaiting a decision on a further submission for 18 months, Ruth was able to submit a Pre-Action Protocol letter to the Home Office (the first step before requesting a Judicial Review). Shortly afterwards, Leave to Remain for 2.5 years was granted to the family.*



*Ruth quickly developed strong rapport in her first meeting with a Gambian asylum seeker fleeing FGM. The client revealed an intimate account of her time in Gambia. This information had not been previously revealed and can now be used as the basis of a fresh claim.*



*A young man from Eritrea, with a long and complicated asylum history, met with Ruth where she quickly identified a strategy for a possible fresh claim.*

*The development of a closer relationship with IBSA legal has proved to be a positive one in my experience, particularly with regard to long and complex cases.*

McKenzie Friends volunteer Bob Butroyd

*"I have been working with McKenzie Friends volunteers by offering a monthly drop-in service to assess client's cases and merits for further submissions. Our partnership has worked well. Volunteers have been helping clients to organise their files and get their cases in order, as well as helping them to gather fresh evidence. This has really eased my work as I can see from the outset the previous decisions, and what we need to challenge. I have been able to take on a number of cases under the Legal Aid scheme, or via exceptional case funding."*

Ruth Tucknott, legal caseworker at IBSA Legal

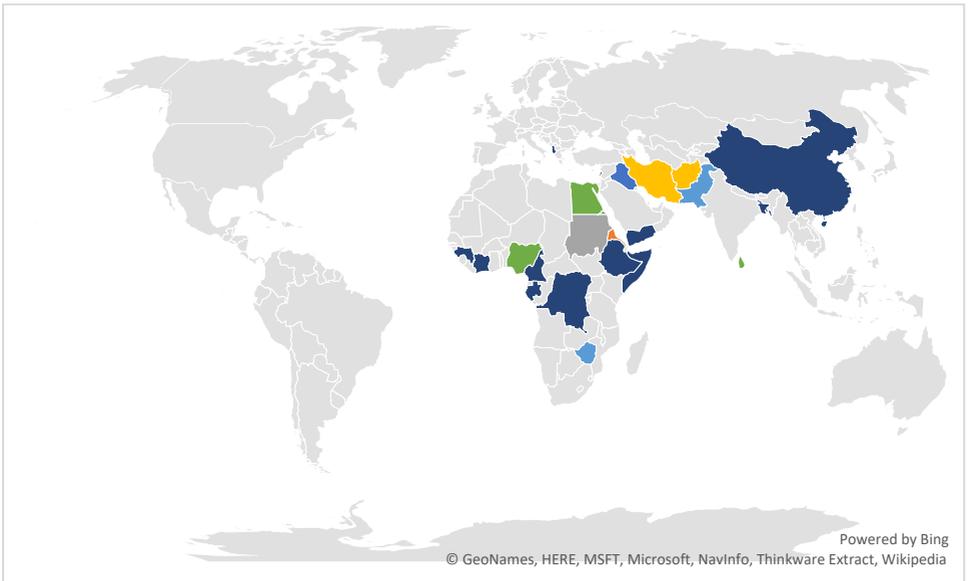


Ruth Tucknott, legal caseworker,  
IBSA Legal



The Band Upstairs performing at the McKenzie  
Friends jazz night, November 2018

**Our clients came from 29 different countries of origin, the most common being Iraq, followed by Eritrea, Sudan, Afghanistan and Iran**



# CHAT PHOENIX HOUSE REPORT



**We're thankful to have been able to continue the wonderful work which goes on in the waiting room at the Phoenix House Immigration and Asylum tribunal centre and to have spoken to many different people and had many interesting conversations.**

As you can see from the statistics we produce, the people we see have come from all corners of the globe, however the common attribute they share is their need for safety and protection here in the UK.

Every day is different at Phoenix House, but our team of volunteers ensure there is a friendly face, a soothing hot drink and a delicious biscuit or two for all who come through the doors. Our volunteers make what is often a highly stressful experience, that little bit easier, and the atmosphere in the waiting room is evident from the moment you walk through the door.

We're thankful to Phoenix House staff for our ongoing relationship with them and for allowing us to deliver our unique service offering a welcoming presence in the tribunal waiting room. There's nothing like this going on in other parts of the country as far as we're aware and so we're even more grateful that we are able to deliver this service here in Bradford.

The biggest thanks by far, goes to our wonderful volunteers, some of whom have been volunteering since the project began many years ago, and we are eternally grateful for their passion, dedication, kindness and cheerfulness! We said goodbye to one of our

Since 1st October 2018, our friendly team of dedicated volunteers served just under **2,000 hot drinks** over **135 mornings** during the year! We are proud to have welcomed **over 1,270 groups and individuals** with cases to be heard, including **476 asylum seekers**. We have had the privilege of meeting people from **68 different countries**. The majority of people came from **Pakistan, Iran, Iraq, or are of Kurdish nationality**. They had travelled to Phoenix House from **30 different towns or places across the country**, most often coming from **Bradford, Leeds, Sheffield and Hull**. **185 people were signposted** to relevant community, voluntary and faith groups known to be supportive in their local area.

longest-standing volunteers, Sylvia this year, who decided to finally step down after volunteering well into her eighties! Our small and friendly team endeavour to ensure the service is present at the tribunal centre most days of the week (Monday to Thursday) but we could always do with new faces to make sure we can always be there for those who need us – get in touch if you'd like to join the team!

*"We are extremely grateful for the service BEACON offers customers of the hearing centre. Many attend with families and can have a lengthy wait. The BEACON volunteers not only provide refreshments but have lots of colouring books and activities to keep the children entertained. It really helps put our customers at ease."*

Vicki Moody, Team Leader,  
Phoenix House IAC

# CHAT ENGLISH CLUB REPORT

**The CHAT English Club has had another fantastic year of learning and laughter with Finn McKay at the helm for the majority of the year after Mandy Oates left the post of CHAT English Club Coordinator in December 2018.**

Finn has continued to ensure the students receive high-quality learning in a fun and friendly environment.

Our wonderful volunteers have also continued to create a safe and supportive learning environment and a place where those seeking sanctuary can forget about their troubles for a couple of hours and focus on being free to live and to learn. And it's not just asylum seekers who come through the doors – we welcome anyone who wants to practise speaking English with our tactful and talented volunteers, and often welcome people from European countries who are residing in the UK. The mix of cultures is fantastic!

The themes we cover are always relevant to daily life in the UK and we ensure students have opportunity to input requests for topics, as well as ensuring activities are differentiated to provide activities for all levels of English speakers.

It's been a year of making the most of the great outdoors, with trips to Saltaire, Lister Park and Horton Community Farm to name just a few.

A big thank you as always to our team of dedicated volunteers who come to the class week in week out, come rain or shine, and always with a smile on their faces! It's the little details that make all the difference – the fresh pastries and fruit carefully chopped each week, the care and attention paid to individual students and time spent getting to know about their lives...

In the last year, we had an **average class size of 10 students**, having registered **58 students from 18 different countries**. **Sudan is the most common country of origin (40%), followed by Iran, Iraq, and Yemen. 77% of students were asylum seekers, 16% were refugees, and 7% were EU nationals.**



**CHAT English Club students and volunteers enjoy a trip to Saltaire**



Quotes from students:

"I like going to the English classes because the tutor and volunteers are helpful. There is a nice young man in charge who is called Finn. He is very outgoing."

"I like to come to the English class because it is small and friendly - not noisy like at college."

"It is a very nice class. It helps with my English. There are many volunteers to help and it is fun."

Quotes from volunteers:

"I love to volunteer at BEACON because I meet lovely people whose lives are very different from mine, and who make me appreciate how fortunate I am in the lottery of life."

"I enjoy meeting and learning about all the lives of the interesting students"



CHAT English Club students enjoy gardening at Horton Community Farm



Santa pays a visit to the CHAT English Club!

# TREASURER'S REPORT

**The need for our services continues to grow and we are grateful to all those who have supported us in the year.**

Our total receipts of approximately £60,000 is a reduction of approximately £5,000 from the previous year principally because of a fall in donations. Our fundraising efforts are extremely effective and need to continue apace because of rising costs.

Our costs have increased by approximately £4,000 to approximately £50,000 principally because of a rise in salary costs arising from a minimal increase in staffing hours to meet demand for services.

We are in a strong cash position to support our reserves policy. As last year, thanks are due to all my colleagues but especially to Amanda Labbett (BEACON Administrative Assistant) who excellently maintains our accounts.

**Roland Clark**  
Treasurer

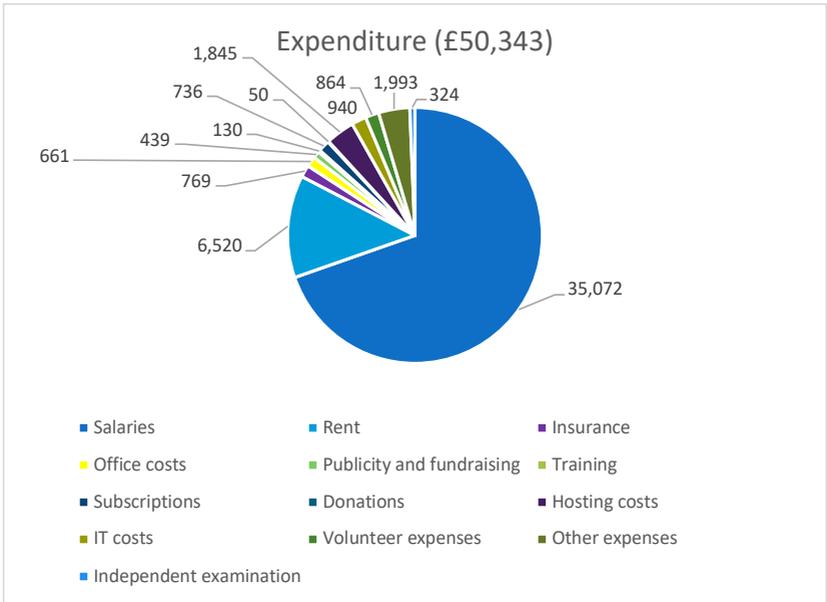
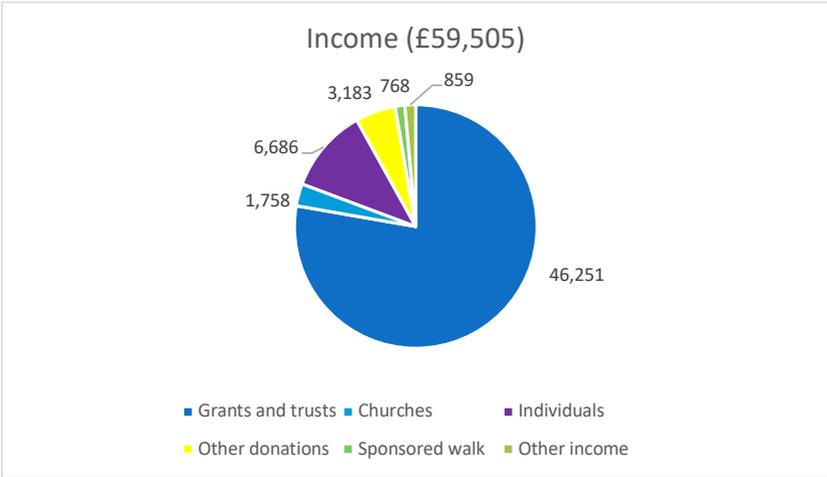


**Congolese-British activist Furaha Mussanzi speaking at BEACON AGM 2018**



**BEACON volunteers' summer social, August 2019**

# INCOME AND EXPENDITURE



A full set of examined accounts is available on request



*Welcome the Stranger*

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