

leeds hardship fund

for asylum seekers

A report of activities 2020-21

Each winter a group of voluntary organizations in Leeds operates a Hardship Fund to provide limited financial support to those in greatest need.

The fund provides small subsistence donations to destitute asylum seekers who have no income at all (for a single person, £25 per week, £40 for couple and usually for 4 weeks maximum). This provides a vital lifeline to people in desperate situations and can mean the difference between a meal and nothing to eat.

The Fund is managed and run by Leeds Hardship Fund Steering Group, which comprise representatives of referral organizations (PAFRAS, British Red Cross, Meeting Point, Solace, LASSN and RETAS) and Leeds Refugee Forum (LRF). LRF monitors the number of referrals and the financial position of the Hardship Fund; keeps the members of the Steering Group informed; and consults with referring organizations if it appears possible to increase the number of weekly referrals or necessary to reduce them.

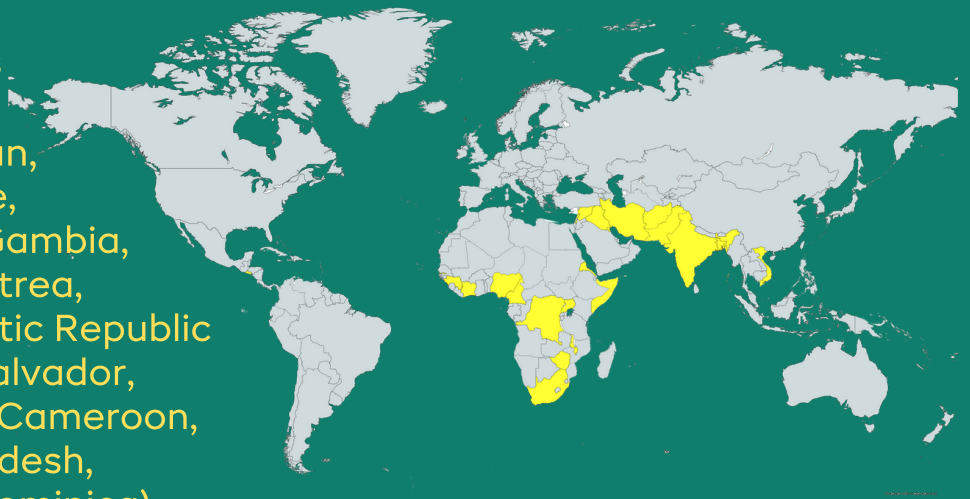
Payments are only made to people who do not have refugee status/leave to remain and have no other income. Referrals should generally be for people in Leeds, including people who have just moved to Leeds. Referring organizations have discretion to make exceptions to this rule, for example people who attend the PAFRAS or Meeting Point drop-in but have temporary accommodation in say Bradford. Each referring organisation normally choose its own method of selecting people for the Hardship Fund but should prioritise those who are most vulnerable, e.g. street homeless, women, children, and those with health issues.

The Fund started operating in the week beginning 30th November 2020 and continued until the end of March 2021. This was a total of 18 weeks.

The fund's steering group decided to make some adjustments in the way payments were provided in accordance with COVID arrangements: LRF ensured One Community Centre was COVID secure, and that masks and hand sanitiser were available for people collecting payments. Payments were made in the usual way, along with the PPE (face masks, hand gel) provided by LRF. It was possible for payments to have been made to 3rd parties (friends, relatives), or for several weeks at a time in a single payment – but only when requested by the referrer and arranged in advance with LRF.



The individuals and families supported this winter came from 25 countries (Iraq, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Zimbabwe, Nigeria, Somalia, Iran, Gambia, Guinea, Ivory Coast, Eritrea, Kuwait, Syria, Democratic Republic of Congo, Uganda, El Salvador, South Africa, Lebanon, Cameroon, India, Palestine, Bangladesh, Malawi, Vietnam and Dominica).



The Hardship Fund ran for 18 weeks and made 227 payments. This comprised of 57 males and 36 females, with some receiving payments more than once. A total of £5,950.00 was distributed. Beneficiaries of the fund were from an age range starting at twenty-one years old up to seventy-three years old. The majority were between thirties to fifties years old. Additionally, we distributed 127 food parcels donated by Wharfedale Refugee Response, Methodist Church in Burley.

Thank you so much to the donors – organisations and individuals alike - for their generous donations. A big thank you to LASSN for the continued support facilitating and collecting donations on continuous basis from their supporters. Thank you PAFRAS, Leeds Christian Community Trust and the British Red Cross for their generous donations this year. Thank you to the referral organisations for their hard work supporting destitute asylum seekers. Thank you to Wharfedale Refugee Response, Methodist Church in Burley for the collection of food parcels.

Leeds Hardship Fund Steering Group would like to affirm that the work and donations from everyone involved made a huge difference to destitute asylum seekers across Leeds

Ali Mahgoub
Leeds Refugee Forum - Director

"I am Eritrean and I have seven years in the United Kingdom. My case refused and I live in difficult circumstances and do not differ from my suffering that led me to leave my country of origin, but there is always a light at the bottom of the tunnel, and this is what I found in the humanitarian dealings and the aid that was provided to me from the Hardship Fund.

Thank you to donors and organisations and I would like say what you are doing to destitute asylum seekers is greatly appreciated. "



Age of Hardship Fund beneficiaries, 2020-21

