



West End Refugee Service

strength through support



**Issue 62 July 2015**

Welcome to the July edition of the WERS newsletter!

**DRASTIC CUTS TO ASYLUM SUPPORT:  
SINGLE PARENTS FAMILIES WILL BE HARDEST HIT**

From 10 August asylum seeking families with children will suffer a big cut in their Government support. A flat rate of asylum support of £36.95 is being introduced and for families with children this will mean that there will be even less money to live on. Support for a lone parent with 2 children is to be reduced by a staggering 25%. Families will be living on 40% less than British families on mainstream benefits.

	Single parent + 1 child	Single parent + 2 children	Couple + 1 child	Couple + 2 children
Current payment	£96.90	£149.86	£125.48	£178.44
New payment	£73.90	£110.85	£110.85	£147.80

These cuts were first proposed back in March but were dropped almost immediately, one theory being that the cuts had been proposed without the approval of Liberal Democrat ministers in the coalition. Last week Government Ministers justified these devastating cuts by saying that the current system had resulted in families with children receiving 'significantly more cash than is necessary' to meet their essential living needs. Unbelievable.

Last year at WERS an astonishing 25,570 items of clothing and other household items were given out in the clothing store to asylum seekers and their families. How are families expected to cope with this latest blow? WERS fears that the health and well-being of children in families affected by these cuts will undoubtedly suffer. As Judith Dennis, Policy Manager at the Refugee Council stated:

'These shameful cuts will plunge children further into poverty and could cause even more unnecessary hunger, ill health and anxiety for some of the most vulnerable families in Britain.'

**Closure of North Shields Immigration Reporting Centre**

The vast majority of the destitute clients supported by WERS Hardship Fund are required to report to Immigration in North Shields once a week. There are separate arrangements for clients living in the Tees Valley region where police stations in Stockton and Middlesbrough are used for the regular reporting appointments.

The North Shields reporting centre is to close and we have serious concerns that asylum seekers living in Newcastle will have to travel to the new reporting centre in Middlesbrough.

Destitute asylum seekers with no state support do not get travel costs from the Home Office for reporting and have to spend a significant chunk of their weekly WERS cash support of £15 to get to their appointments in North Shields. If this proposed move to a single reporting centre for the whole of the north east region comes about, this would have very serious implications for those supported by the hardship fund.

Surely the Home Office will see sense and provide alternative reporting arrangements for asylum seekers living in the north of the region. Or maybe they won't...

**Right to work? Of little practical use to asylum seekers, actually**

Most asylum seekers are not allowed to work – one of the many contentious rules in UK asylum regulations.

Successive governments have rejected calls to extend asylum seekers' rights to work. They can only apply for permission to work if they have waited for over 12 months for an initial decision on their asylum claim or they have been refused asylum but have not received a response to further submissions submitted over 12 months ago and are not considered by the Home Office to be responsible for the delay.

However, this permission to work only allows them to do jobs on the UK's Shortage Occupation List, so in practical terms is generally completely useless. WERS knows a clever, able woman who was thrilled to hear that she had been granted permission to work, only to discover that none of her qualifications and experience matched any of the very restricted list of jobs on the SOL (Shortage Occupations List). What is the point of giving something with one hand but then essentially taking it away with the other?

Here we have someone who is desperately keen to work and contribute to the UK whose skills are not being utilised. What a nonsense!

#### **Congratulations to Evelyne!**



Evelyne, WERS' Clothing Store Supervisor, recently graduated with a Health and Social Care Degree. We are all full of admiration for someone who can work at WERS, look after her children and still find time to study and hand in the dreaded assignments on time! WERS is very proud of her.

#### **Goodbye to Vanessa**

Vanessa Nogueras, our Office Manager, is moving to pastures new at the end of July. WERS wishes her all the very best for the future.

**WERS is still very short of men's clothing.  
Any donations will be very gratefully received.**

#### **WERS Annual General Meeting**

**Thursday 1 October 2015 6pm**

Westgate Baptist Church  
366 Westgate Road  
Newcastle upon Tyne  
NE4 6NX

Tea and coffee available from 5.30pm

Our guest speaker will be Julian Prior, CEO of Action Foundation, who will focus on housing provision for asylum seekers and refugees both locally and nationally. Action Foundation runs two housing projects:

Action Housing provides accommodation and support to destitute asylum seekers with no recourse to public funds. Action Letting manages property for landlords and lets them to homeless refugees in need of accommodation and support.

Everyone very welcome!

#### **Office details:**

**West End Refugee Service**

**St Philip's Vicarage**

**St Philip's Close**

**Arthur's Hill**

**Newcastle upon Tyne**

**NE4 5JE**

**Tel: 0191 273 7482**

**Fax: 0191 256 7862**

**Email: [info@wers.org.uk](mailto:info@wers.org.uk)**

**Website: [www.wers.org.uk](http://www.wers.org.uk)**

