



West End Refugee Service

strength through support



Issue 67: October 2016

**Festive Week 2016:
12 -16 December**



'I look in the mirror every day and try to tell myself I am ok. Sometimes it doesn't work but sometimes it does.'

Mehdi (not his real name) has been homeless since December 2015. His first visit to WERS was just before Festive Week last year so he received a bag of gifts along with his hardship support. It is expected that he will still be destitute when Festive Week comes around again this year. It won't have been a great year for Mehdi. He is still waiting to hear the result of his fresh claim for asylum. He is still staying with friends whenever he can but has no place of his own. His health has improved a little: 'When I have flashbacks I wake up sweating and can't motivate myself. Other times I am able to get up and face the day.'

WERS has already started collecting gifts to give to the 130 destitute asylum seekers (120 men and 10 women) who are being supported by the Hardship Fund. If you are able to help, we are collecting the same things as last year:

**Shower gel, shampoo, toothpaste, deodorant, hand cream
Woolly hats, scarves, gloves, socks
Bars of chocolate (no nuts)**

We will also need 130 bags to put the gifts in so we would very much appreciate gifts of paper or plastic carrier bags too.

It would be great if gifts could be brought to WERS by Friday 2nd December.

Thank you very much!

WERS welcomes not one but two Bishops!

On the afternoon of 1st September, the day when the new Bishop of Berwick was announced, WERS welcomed the Bishop of Newcastle, Rt Revd Christine Hardman, and the Bishop of Berwick Designate, Revd Canon Mark Tanner, and their party to St Philip's Vicarage as part of their whistle-stop tour of the Diocese.

The visitors met with some of the WERS staff team who introduced them to Adesuwa and Akachukwu and their two children who had recently been granted leave to remain. Adesuwa and Akachukwu, both volunteers at WERS, spoke about their work with the charity and also about the support that WERS gives to asylum seekers and refugees, citing the 'family atmosphere' that greeted them at the vicarage as being of special importance.



WERS presented the two Bishops with WERS shopping bags before the party left for the last visit of the tour, St Giles' Church, Chollerton.

On 18th October the Revd Canon Mark Tanner was consecrated to serve as Suffragan Bishop of Berwick by the Archbishop of York, Dr John Sentamu, in York Minster.

WERS Autumn Raffle

An excellent £1,235 was raised for the hardship fund. WERS thanks everyone who showed their support for destitute asylum seekers by buying a ticket. £1,235 will provide 82 destitute clients with a £15 hardship fund payment.

A special thank-you goes to volunteers Clare and Jane who promoted the raffle and managed to sell an enormous number of tickets. Total stars!

The Calais camp: no place for a child... or indeed any human being



Fourteen children have been pictured arriving in the UK this week to be reunited with relatives ahead of the demolition of the French camp, but hundreds more remain.

In 2016, Lord Dubs sponsored an amendment to the Immigration Act 2016 to offer unaccompanied refugee children safe passage to Britain amidst the European migrant crisis. This amendment, with some revisions, was accepted by the British Government.

Lord Dubs said:

‘In the coming days, Citizens UK’s Safe Passage team will be working round the clock to ensure that all children with a legal right to sanctuary in the UK are brought to safety.’

‘This includes the children eligible under the Dubs

amendment, for whom there is still no official process in place. No child must be left behind in the chaos of demolition.’

‘Looking ahead we must never allow a repeat of Calais.’

‘The Government must learn lessons from this situation and realise that it has a duty to make the Dublin mechanism work across Europe, as well as establishing a clear procedure for children without family eligible for sanctuary under the Dubs amendment.’

And yet it beggars belief that welcoming a tiny number of vulnerable young people to join their families in the UK appears to be beyond the capability of some. Today (19th October) there have been complaints that some of the young people ‘looked older than 18’ and despicable calls for dental checks to be carried to verify their age. Even the Home Office has dismissed this idea as ‘inaccurate, inappropriate and unethical.’

WERS AGM

The AGM on 4th October was very well-attended and the inspirational talk about the global refugee crisis by Jonathan Ellis of British Red Cross encouraged us all.

Lindsay Cross

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