



West Yorkshire Destitute Asylum Network (C.I.O.)
Registered Charity Number 1158052
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WYDAN NEWSLETTER - Autumn 2021

Dear Colleagues, Friends and Supporters,

As I start to write this update for you I look out of my window on this cold and rainy, windswept day. I am reminded of the same feeling every year as winter approaches, a feeling of dread for the untold numbers of people who may be sleeping out on the streets on a night like tonight. Since winter 2015 we have provided emergency accommodation, over the coldest months of the year, to destitute asylum seekers across Leeds and we are very pleased to announce that we will be able to provide some emergency accommodation this coming winter, more about this later. Firstly though I would like to give you an update from our previous newsletter and to let you know what we have been doing this summer.

After a very busy spring and summer we now have all of our properties up and running. We have two, four bedroomed properties, one in Harehills and one in Beeston. We also have a two bedroomed flat in Harehills.

Our properties are now well-established homes, with a feeling of warmth, safety, security and sanctuary. Our guests are supported by a fantastic team of volunteers who provide allowances, shopping and befriending to all of our guests.

Ali's Story.

Ali was referred to us back in January when we were running our 'shelter' at a hotel in Leeds. Ali has been in this country for many years with no progression on his asylum claim for a long time. Due to the nature of being destitute and his significant mental health issues Ali had found it very difficult to engage with his case worker and other support networks. After a full risk assessment and placing extra measures in place we were able to accept Ali into the hotel and matched him up with some great befrienders. He quickly settled into the hotel and within a relatively short period of time we saw significant improvements to both his physical and mental health. Due to the ongoing stability with his accommodation and his own hard work we were able to move him into our shared house in Beeston, where he has continued to flourish and recently has had his fresh claim for asylum accepted by the Home Office and will hopefully soon be moving into government accommodation. His caseworker from the British Red Cross, on receiving this news said, 'without the support of WYDAN, and getting off the street I was worried that he would die'.

Our partners and referral agencies tell us that while it is wonderful to have more 'bed spaces' across the city, there is a desperate need for emergency accommodation, and we are really pleased to say that WYDAN will once again be opening some emergency provision in the hotel we used last winter from 1st November 2021 until 31st March 2022.

Since March 2020 when we had to close the shelter due to the Covid pandemic, WYDAN has responded wherever and however we can to support destitute asylum seekers across the city. We are looking forward to a few months of stability, providing care and support to our guests both within our housing provision and hotel. We are unable to reopen our 'shelter' due to current guidance. Over the next few months and particularly in the spring we will re-evaluate this and wait to see how the pandemic takes its course over the coming winter and we will not reopen the shelter until it is safe to do so. We will be talking to all our host organisations and consulting with other partners to see which is the best way to do this and we will keep you updated.

Volunteering Opportunity

We are looking for a volunteer to help us develop the marketing of WYDAN through our newsletter, website and social media in order to promote the work of WYDAN, to attract new volunteers, support existing volunteers and increase engagement. This role would involve working with the manager and the WYDAN IT consultant. Please email shelter@wydan.org for further information.

Funding Appeal

As a result of the wonderful generosity of our supporters and a series of successful grant applications, WYDAN have been able to commit to emergency accommodation provision this winter as well as the ongoing accommodation in the houses established over the last 8 months. **To continue this level of provision into next year WYDAN will remain dependent on individual and group generosity.** Please consider whether you or a group/organisation you know can make a one off or regular donations, or whether you could organise a fundraising event for us (if requested, we can set up CAF fundraising pages for specific appeals and sponsored events).

This fantastic success story may inspire you:

I had initially been involved with WYDAN through my local church - St Matthews in Chapel Allerton. Before the pandemic hit us, in February 2020, I enjoyed preparing a spaghetti bolognese in the largest cooking pots I could get my hands on! A couple of socialising shifts later and I felt humbled to be involved with such an inspiring and caring charity.

Fast forward about fourteen months and I received the WYDAN newsletter which highlighted that refugee week was coming up in June. I was eager to get back in touch with WYDAN and felt school could be a great place to fundraise. I wanted to organise a fundraiser that included all children from age 4 - 11. I also wanted it to be relatively straightforward to organise and run. A sponsored run which required every child to run 20 laps of the playground was the idea with an initial fundraising target of £500. A whole school letter was sent to parents explaining who WYDAN are and details of the upcoming runs. I also led some child friendly year group assemblies with the children to launch the upcoming event and deepen their knowledge of the challenges asylum seekers face.

In just a couple of days the 'Just Giving' page sum had already shot up to £200. The families really got behind the cause and I was overwhelmed by the number of donations made in the weeks that followed. One little boy called Milan, in year three, had a staggering number of sponsors and had asked most of his Dad's colleagues to sponsor him! We ended up raising over £6000 and the children really did demonstrate determination to complete the laps and empathy when discussing the work WYDAN do. It was lovely when Katrina came into school to thank the children and families. I look forward to working with other local schools in the future and encourage them to fundraise too!

Donations are always welcome!

By post to WYDAN, c/o Andrew Rathbone, 256B Burley Road, Leeds LS4 2LA, cheques made payable to WYDAN.

Direct to the WYDAN's bank account no 20323123. Sort code 60-83-01.

Online via the Charities Aid Foundation platform <https://cafdonate.cafonline.org/15943>

Gift Aid: Please let us know if we can claim gift aid on any donation (provide first line of address and postcode).

THANK YOU FOR YOUR CONTINUING SUPPORT