



Newsletter Autumn / Winter 2023

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LAST YEAR'S FIGURES

- ✓ 2703 visits to the Drop-in by asylum seekers and refugees (69% increase over previous year);
- ✓ 954 casework support sessions (remote, appointments and walk-ins)
- ✓ 1777 food parcels valued at over £27,000
- ✓ £2050 supermarket vouchers

Season's Greetings and a Big Thank You

Season's greetings to you all as 2023 draws to a close. What a year it has been. We've said farewell to old friends and welcomed new; we are as busy as ever, both at Drop in and with casework and we continue to navigate the challenges and uncertainties of the national and global landscape. But we have much to celebrate as well, more of which follows.

Unfortunately, this will be our last newsletter for the time being. Due to our current

capacity, we have taken the decision to focus on the website as our main avenue of publicity and the internal reporting that is key to measuring our performance and supports our fundraising.

We would like, at this point, to thank everyone who has contributed and in particular, Denis Madden, who has supported DP in the production of the newsletter, helping us put together a polished and enjoyable read. We wish Denis all the best for the future.

The Annual General Meeting (AGM)

After considerable preparation, DP's AGM was held on 19th September at the Victoria Hall. The weather outside was awful on the day but the food, performances by service users and the fellowship were all terrific.

Thanks to lots of hard work by our team in planning the event, attendance was as good as anyone could remember: twenty team members, twelve service users and seventeen supporters and representatives of various organisations.



We were delighted to welcome several guests including the Mayor of Bolton – Councillor Mohammed Ayub; our former Chair of Trustees - Paul Martin; former Trustee and DP Manager – David O'Keeffe and a number of key supporters and many organisational representatives

including from OISC, City of Sanctuary, Bolton CVS, Bolton Council, Bolton College, Bolton Christian Community Cohesion and various faith and non-faith-based groups who regularly donate to DP.

Thankfully we managed to get through all formal financial and business matters quickly, enjoying some superb reports delivered by our team leaders and an audio-visual display of DP's work during the 2022-23 financial year. By the time we all left the sun was shining.

The minutes, the slide presentation and photos of the event are available on the website:
www.boltondp.org/destitution-project-annual-general-meeting-was-a-success

Special THANK YOUs

Once more to all our regular supporters including St John's Bromley Cross; the pupils and staff at St Michael's Primary; Ladybridge High; Oxford Grove and all the kind individuals who regularly donate. Also, a special thank you to Christ Church Drama Group who donated the proceeds of one of their performances totaling £760.

Irina is Shortlisted for the 'She Inspires' Volunteer of the Year Award

Each year the SHE INSPIRES awards celebrate the huge wealth of outstanding contributions women have made to Bolton in eighteen diverse categories. Six of these categories are open to women from all over the UK and the world.

One of our volunteers, Irina Avetisova, was nominated by Bolton College where she volunteers and also learns English. Out of 100 contenders, Irina was chosen as one of the six finalists. The results were



announced at the awards ceremony held at the Bolton Stadium Hotel on Thursday 23rd November where she was presented with a plaque and a booklet which included her personal story. Needless to say, we are very proud of Irina and celebrated with her at our Drop-in on Wednesday 29th November.

More available at:
www.sheinspiresawards.com

Our Midday Meal prepared by Bolton Mutual Aid (BMA)

The Drop-in would not be the Drop-in without the delicious, hot midday meal served up by Alan and his team of two, Carol and John from BMA (Bolton Mutual Aid). They work very closely with DP to prepare a healthy, vegan meal that all our service users can enjoy including those whose diet is



halal (vegan food satisfies halal requirements) and write the day's menu up on a board outside the kitchen.

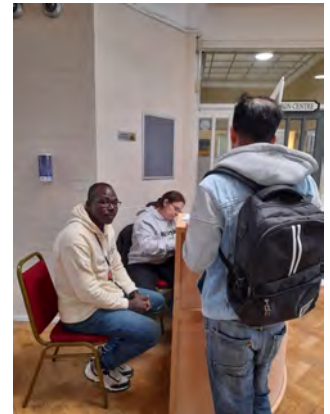
If Alan cannot attend, his colleagues Kath or Wayne step in. Failing that it's down to a DP volunteer with tins and a can opener - no question as to which is the tastier!

DP Reception Teams

Every Wednesday at 10 am either Narjess, Jenny or Ahmed open the doors and then welcome our service users (SUs) throughout the day. The task can be complex, requiring them to check ID, home address (we support asylum seekers and refugees living in Bolton) and immigration status so we can give targeted help such as food parcels and casework advice if needed. The Main Reception team use an Excel-based registration system to log SUs in. They work closely with

Casework Reception and Shaheda (our Senior Caseworker) to help all who attend access appropriate services. Just as important - everyone gets a smile and a friendly welcome.

Casework Reception, often staffed by Fiona (our Casework Admin Assistant), is also kept very busy dealing with a wide range of asylum support and information needs. Where the query is outside of our ability, Shaheda signposts SUs to other support organisations wherever possible. We aim to let no one leave empty handed!



Supporting DP Financially

1. Online payment using a credit or debit card: 4. Card payment

You can do this via the **CAF Donate** platform on our website: <https://www.boltondp.org/support-us>

2. Cheque - please make these out to The Destitution Project and post them to:

The Destitution Project, c/o Victoria Hall, 37-39 Knowsley Street, Bolton, BL1 2AS.

3. Standing Order - you can set up a regular donation either by a) doing so using CAF Donate (details in 1 above) or b) downloading and filling in the Standing Order form at: <https://www.boltondp.org/downloads/dp-standing-order-CIO.pdf> Once you have set up the Standing Order with your bank, then, send us a copy of your completed Standing Order Form to the postal address in 2 above.



4. easyfundraising - Did you know you can support DP by raising money every time you shop online? Support that means we can be more generous with our food parcels - and it doesn't cost you a penny!

Working with over 7,500 online retailers, including Tesco, M&S, Boots etc, *easyfundraising* is a free fundraising platform that allows DP to earn through your online shopping. Full details can be found on the website:

www.easyfundraising.org.uk

When you use the *easyfundraising* browser extension or app, the participating retailer will send DP a donation based on how much you spend.

5. Gift Aid - In addition, if you are a regular taxpayer then you could consider offering us Gift Aid at no extra cost to yourself, which would increase your contribution by a further 25%.

The Main Hall Team

The main hall in the Wesley Suite is the hub of DP's Drop-in activity. Each week between 8.30am and 9.30am Ian, Moutasim and David set out chairs and tables for a range of activities: the midday meal, social spaces, clothing displays, art activities, table tennis and pool. Moutasim has a dual role in also holding the communication radio so that main reception can let him know when SUs with trolleys or push chairs who are coming round to the back door.

Irina sets up the hot drinks and biscuits table. Nobody can enter

"the Wesley" without receiving a greeting and an offer of a drink from Irina (who also helps in the Food room and with sorting clothes if she has time)!

Ian and Diana create a welcoming space at the Art table where many SUs spend time being creative and making good use of the art materials.

At the end of the day everyone 'mucks in' to clean, tidy and put everything away so that the room is ready for the other users. And when they are able to, trustees, Sarah, David, Bernard or Mags lend a hand to support the team



Casework Services at DP

If you are an Asylum Seeker or a refused Asylum Seeker who lives in Bolton you can contact our Senior Caseworker, Shaheda, on:

*Monday: 9am to 2pm
Tuesday: 9am to 1pm
Wednesday: 9am to 3pm
Thursday: 9am to 2pm
Friday: 9am to 1pm*

Tel - 07421 352829 (send a text of leave a message)
Email - Shaheda.destitutionproject73@gmail.com

Please note: Face-to-face meetings with Shaheda are by appointment only and these must be arranged ahead of time by contacting her first by phone or email.

If DP cannot give you the help you need, we will make every effort to signpost you to other sources of support.

Do continue to follow us by checking our website and Facebook page.

We wish you an enjoyable festive season and the very best for 2024.



The Destitution Project
Victoria Hall
37-39 Knowsley Street
Bolton BL1 2AS

Phone: 01204 387 221
Website: www.boltondp.org
Email: dropindp@gmail.com

Casework Case Study.....

M B is from Ethiopia and has been receiving casework support from DP since 2018. His asylum case has been refused twice and on both occasions DP's Senior Caseworker assisted with sorting Section 4 housing and money support. Home Office granted housing in Bolton on both occasions.

A few months ago he was refused once again and became destitute (homeless). He could only sofa surf for a while so the DP Caseworker made a referral to Boaz in Manchester (there were no night shelters in Bolton for refused asylum seekers). He was on the waiting list for a while then Boaz were able to house him in Manchester. He is receiving money support from them. M B has a solicitor for doing a fresh asylum claim and the DP Caseworker was able to provide a supporting letter showing the support DP provided him in the past and other key documents.