

LIVERPOOL ARCHDIOCESAN CENTRE FOR EVANGELISATION

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ARCHDIOCESE
OF LIVERPOOL



Archdiocese of Liverpool
Justice & Peace Commission

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Dear friends,

You will remember Pope Francis' Angelus appeal on 6th September.

Firstly, I want to explain the apparent lack of response from the archdiocese, then to describe some of what has been happening and finally to suggest some ways in which it would be possible to help.

Lack of response:

The Catholic Bishops Conference of England and Wales encouraged all dioceses to nominate a named person to coordinate response to the Pope's plea. In our diocese, that was me. My priority was to get clarity over what is actually happening to refugees from Syria and in the asylum process in general. The UK government is not keen to give facts and figures and will only communicate with selected people. Even the bishops' representative has seen the minister just once. Local Authorities are easier to contact but they have been negotiating with government over finance, etc, and are still unwilling to talk to potential local partners. The most helpful organisations have been those already involved in responding to asylum seekers and refugees. The archdiocese is working closely with the CofE diocese of Liverpool.

What's been happening:

1. It is important to be as well-informed as possible. The information and analysis have been shared via the diocesan website, the Catholic Pictorial and in meetings across the diocese.
2. The basic distinction is between people in the camps on the borders of Syria and asylum seekers in the UK.
3. The UK government is liaising directly with local authorities to give homes to 20,000 people from the camps over five years. A small number of families may arrive in the North West by the middle of this year. The 1, 037,000 people who entered Europe during 2015 are not included in the government's offer.
4. The government has also negotiated with local authorities to accept more asylum seekers into the North West.
5. Our response to both situations must involve partnerships with local authorities.
6. The local authorities in Liverpool, Sefton, St Helens, West Lancashire and Knowsley welcome the interest of the churches. We are beginning to organise in Warrington, Halton, and South Ribble. There is much to do.
7. An explanatory booklet will soon be available from the Justice and Peace Commission. (The last page of this letter is taken from the booklet.)
8. There are several well established organisations that have been helping asylum seekers and refugees for fifteen years. (A list is on the next page.) These groups have become an increasingly important focus of our diocesan approach. They are delighted that the churches are increasing their response to the terrible problems that already exist.
9. We're in contact with people from across the country who are doing similar work. This includes JRS (Jesuit Refugee Services), CitizensUK, and the dioceses of Salford, Shrewsbury, Lancaster, Plymouth, Southwark, and Arundel and Brighton.
10. At the same time as showing compassion for refugees we have maintained our focus on the needs of local people, many of whom are struggling to make ends meet in the face of the

current economic situation in the UK. Again ecumenically, we have maintained our involvement in anti-poverty work, specifically with heavy involvement in the *Feeding Liverpool* initiative.

How can we help?

The following organisations already offer a chance to get involved:

In Liverpool: ALM, MRANG, Hope+

In Huyton: St Agnes parish are engaged in a variety of activities

In Leigh: LASARS

In Wigan: SWAP

(Addresses and contact details are at end of this letter)

To be effective, groups need to acknowledge local authority boundaries and work in conjunction with the local authority, the other churches and the local CVS.

Typically, a group would offer befriending to newcomers into the area, whether refugees or asylum seekers. The group would provide a warm and clean space, friendly people and simple hospitality. Help with integration into the community would include sharing knowledge of local amenities such as doctors, dentists and libraries. Crucially, a group would provide opportunities for conversation in English. Although useful, it would not be necessary to have expertise in asylum law, benefits, housing, or any of the other special concerns that people will have.

There are currently groups beginning this process in Ainsdale and Warrington. A suggested volunteer role description is at the bottom of this page.

One of the issues to be addressed is that safeguarding procedures will need to be followed. Both the Local Authority and the archdiocese would be willing to help with the process.

If you would like to become actively involved in the development of this response please contact the J&P office to discuss and help plan what we can do next.

In planning is the J&P Annual Assembly 'Welcoming the Stranger' on Saturday June 25th which will address these issues by developing our thinking, give opportunity to meet with others who are actively involved and encourage a coordinated response.

In peace,

VOLUNTEER ROLE DESCRIPTION: PARISH BASED BEFRIENDER	
PURPOSE	To provide support to asylum seekers and refugees living in the local community
TASKS	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Help to run an informal drop-in 2. Provide a warm welcome 3. Provide information on local amenities: # Libraries # Doctors # Shops # Play groups # Leisure facilities # etc 4. Help with English conversation 5. Help with written English 6. Sign-post people to specialist advice
EXCLUDED TASKS	Volunteers will not be asked to give specialist advice on: # Housing # Benefits # Asylum law # Home Office procedure
WHERE	Community venue in local neighbourhood
TIME COMMITMENT	Session length will depend on local arrangements but will usually last between 1.5 and 2 hours
TRAINING	The organising group will run a short induction process
LINE MANAGEMENT	The organising group will offer mentoring and regular debriefing sessions
CONTACT INFORMATION	Each organising group will provide publicity (posters and leaflets, etc) to inform the local churches and media of the initiative
HOW TO APPLY	Each organising group will set its own criteria and process
SAFEGUARDING	Each organisation will need to be compliant with legislation appropriate to the age of the refugees
DEVELOPMENT	# Access to internet # ESOL classes # Homework clubs # Lifts to appointments # Trips to local sites, seaside, etc

LOCAL ACTION CONTACTS

Asylum Link Merseyside (ALM)

ALM offers a range of services and support to asylum seekers at St Anne's Centre, 7 Overbury Street, Liverpool, L7 3HJ
Phone: 0151 709 1713 email: info@asylumlink.org.uk
Website: <http://www.asylumlink.org.uk/contact.html>

Merseyside Refugee and Asylum Seekers Pre & Postnatal Support Group (MRANG)

MRANG addresses the needs of pre and post natal refugees and asylum seekers, including those who were pregnant or had children as a result of rape
Address: 37-45 Windsor St, Liverpool L8 1XE
Phone: [0151 708 6316](tel:01517086316)
Website: <http://mrang.org.uk/>

HOPE+

Community outreach for those in food poverty care of Liverpool Cathedral
Address: Liverpool Cathedral, St James' Mount, Liverpool L1 7AZ
Foodbank and advice pantries are open at:
St Vincent's Church, St James' Street, L1 5JP every Tuesday between 12.30pm and 2.30pm
St Margaret's Church, Princes Road, L8 1TG every Thursday between 12.30pm and 2.30pm.
Website: <http://www.liverpoolcathedral.org.uk/home/about-us/hope-plus-food-bank.aspx>
Phone: 07973212137

Support for Wigan Arrivals Project (SWAP)

Support for Wigan Arrivals Project – SWAP – is a community organisation based in the town of Wigan but working across Wigan Borough, including Leigh, Ashton-in-Makerfield, Hindley, Standish, Golborne and the areas in-between. SWAP has a particular focus on helping refugees and asylum seekers.
Address: Penson St, Wigan WN1 2LP
Tel: 01942 614486 For Volunteering opportunities call: 01942 614489
Website: <http://www.swapwigan.org/>

Leigh Asylum Seekers and Refugees Support (LASARS)

LASARS works in Leigh and surrounding areas. At the weekly "Drop-in" (Tuesday 12 till 3 pm) asylum seekers and refugees can get support with a range of queries: housing, job applications, health and solicitors.
Address: Kingsleigh Methodist Youth Centre, Kings Street, Leigh WN7 4LR
Website: <https://sites.google.com/site/lasarsonline/>

Merseyside Refugee Support Network (MRSN)

an information and support service for local refugee communities and organisations working with and for refugees and asylum seekers.
Works in partnership with LASAR – Liverpool Asylum Seeker & Refugee Development Partnership, and Merseyside Network for Change
Address: 1st Floor, St Anne's Centre, 7 Overbury Street, Liverpool, L7 3HJ
Phone: **0151 709 7557** Email: lasar_mrsn@yahoo.com
Website: <http://www.merseysidenetworkforchange.org/>

Refugee Action

Kuumba Imani Millenium Centre, 4 Princes Road, Liverpool, L8 1TH.
Phone: **0151 214 3020** For help contact Asylum Help on **0808 8000 630**
Website: http://www.refugee-action.org.uk/in_your_area/liverpool

St Agnes Parish, Huyton

This parish has a long history of supporting ALM. It recently organised van loads of good to the camps in Calais. It hosted the J&P Advent 'Carols in the City' focussed on Asylum Seekers.
Fr Anton Fernandopulle
Phone: **0151 489 3085** to contact parish assistant