



STANDING ALONGSIDE REFUGEES AND ASYLUM SEEKERS IN DONCASTER

A view from the edge

Doncaster Conversation Club Newsletter

07 December 2017

IN THIS ISSUE

Healthcare - free at the point of use?

By Julia Burne

'Healthcare - free at the point of use' doesn't apply to everyone in the UK. The regulations have recently been tightened to reduce the amount of 'health tourism'.

From October 2017, you have to prove entitlement to free healthcare through showing the correct documents or in other ways. If proof cannot be provided, you will have to pay upfront before receiving treatment, and treatment will be withheld until payment is made - unless a clinician states that treatment is 'urgent' or 'immediately necessary'. If treatment is given in an 'urgent' situation, the recipient will be sent the bill after the treatment has been given.

The mental and physical costs of this new system to the individuals involved is self-evident. The cost to the NHS also seems very high. There

will be employment and training of staff to carry out the procedures. There will be the more hidden costs of delays to diagnosis and procedures resulting in deterioration of physical and mental health resulting in complications - which will then also need treating. Jeremy Hunt states that the increase in net income to the NHS from collection of these payments is estimated to be £40 million per year. This is in the context of expenditure on the NHS in 2016/2017 of £120.512 billion. Other hidden costs will be those to the charities and other advice centres who will need to support those who are refused treatment without payment - and yet still have medical needs.

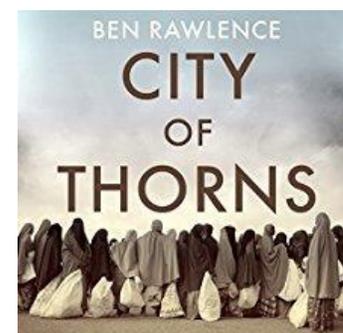
I think there are difficult times ahead.

For further details on charges, see page 2



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NHS Charging Regulations

By Julia Burne

Most members of DCC will not have to pay.

Health charges are not due from:-

- Refugees (who have the same rights as UK citizens.)
- Asylum seekers receiving support from the National Asylum Support Service (NASS), ie with an active asylum claim.
- EU nationals.
- Non EEA nationals who have paid the health surcharge.

Those who will be charged include:-

- Those who are destitute in the UK and without documentation.
- Asylum seekers whose claim for asylum has failed but are not able to return to their home country.

From October 2017 hospitals are now legally required to check every patient's paperwork before treating them. However, **non-chargeable** NHS services will still include:-

- A&E departments,
- GP surgeries,
- Primary care services,
- The diagnosis and treatment of infectious diseases.

Chargeable services include:-

- Community midwifery.
- Community mental health services.
- District nursing.
- Drug and alcohol treatment services.
- Support groups and advocacy services receiving funding from the NHS.

There are some special cases:-

- Maternity services will be treated as being

'immediately necessary' (see above) - although the woman will be informed that charges will apply to her treatment.

- Survivors of torture will be exempt from charges for the treatment for the consequences of the torture (although not exempt for treatment of other conditions). Many of this group will already qualify for exemption as they will still be seeking asylum – but there will be torture survivors who are 'Appeal Rights Exhausted' but planning a fresh claim.

Exemptions also apply to:-

- those in immigration detention centres;
- victims or suspected victims of modern slavery;
- those detained in an NHS hospital on a court order (under the Mental Health Act 1983 or the Mental Capacity Act 2005).

The law to put these up front charges in place, has only just been passed so its implementation is only just starting. Identifying those who need to pay is the responsibility of each hospital. The Guidance on implementation states that potential hospital patients should be interviewed to establish if they are chargeable or not. Hospitals participating in a pilot study suggested utility bills, passport and visas as proof of residence. However, Jeremy Hunt states 'there are no fixed evidential requirements and simple non-discriminatory questions should be asked by trained staff to assist in the identification of patients who should be charged'.

There are obvious causes for concern and many potential problems:-

- There is ample scope for discriminatory practice - will all patients to be screened in this way or will just those with a different accent or a foreign sounding name be interviewed?
- If everyone attending hospital is interviewed the delays to treatment will be enormous.
- Many people will not have appropriate paperwork in spite of a legitimate reason for being in the country – how well trained will their interviewers be and how dogged in pursuing the correct answer about legitimacy.
- Of those who 'fail' the test, will there be adequate flexibility in the system to change their status once a fresh claim has been submitted – or will the 'need to pay' status get stuck on their records.
- For those who have an 'immediately necessary' procedure, how assiduous will the NHS be at pursuing someone who is destitute and does not have the means to pay? Our experience at DCC is that the NHS does not give up on these individuals – they are meant to pay a small amount each week possibly with the help of a debt advisory service. However if you have NO money, this is still impossible.

There is the continued threat to those who have debts which are not paid to the state, that future applications for Leave to Remain in the UK could be compromised.

Clothes distribution at Urban House, Wakefield

By Linda Fielding, Wakefield City of Sanctuary

The Clothing Store is run in conjunction with the Asylum Seekers Support Fund and comes under the umbrella of Wakefield District City of Sanctuary. As such, the Clothing Store offers second-hand clothes, bedding, school uniforms, toys and small household items to local dispersed asylum seekers, new refugees and people connected to resettlement programmes. It also offers support to the growing number of asylum seekers with no recourse to public funds. People can arrive at Urban House with little or no luggage. The asylum contract for IACs does not provide clothing or cash support; while people are at the IAC, they do not receive benefits. Only when people are moved from the IAC to National Asylum Seekers Support (NASS) housing do they start to receive NASS benefits. Whilst in the IAC asylum seekers live in a virtually cashless society. However, the IAC contract does include all meals, washing facilities, toiletries, bedding and access to health checks and screening.

All the people that arrive at the IAC are traumatized – on their journey, amongst other things, they have lost all stability in their lives. The City of Sanctuary movement offers a welcome; the Clothing Store offers practical support. For people who do not have luggage we offer Emergency Packs, this can be followed by a Change of Clothes Pack and Support Items. We do this through a request and delivery system. The receptionists and the management at Urban House can see if people have no luggage and

contact the Clothing Store. People at Urban House can ask at reception for clothing and we do our best to offer what we can. The Health team and the Health Visitor also ensure that people, especially children, have access to clothing.

The Emergency Packs is a set of new clothes. Each pack consists of underwear, socks, jogging pants, t-shirt and a hoodie or fleecy. For children under 5yrs the packs have extra underwear and t-shirts. Emergency packs are followed up with Change of Clothes Packs. All Change of Clothes Packs consist of new underwear, new socks, decent washed jogging pants, trousers or leggings, t-shirts and a jumper or warm top. Coats, hats, scarfs and gloves are generally offered during the winter months.

Pregnant women who pass through Urban House have not had the opportunity to prepare for the arrival of their child. Not having anything ready for your baby is extremely worrying and stressful. The Clothing Store tries to ensure that all pregnant women are given a 'Welcome to the World' Pack – this pack is made up of new items and contains a cotton baby blanket, towel, baby vests, babygrows, a hand knitted baby layette and a handknitted baby blanket. When donation or funds allow we add a pram suit or baby coat. All the knitted items are knitted with love and given in friendship by Knitters of Sanctuary. Anyone can be a Knitter of Sanctuary, and throughout the year we welcome all sizes of knitted hats, mittens and toys.

Being pregnant, and often alone, in a foreign country with a different culture is unbelievably difficult. Being given a gift for your child demonstrates peoples' acceptance and willingness to welcome you and your baby. The Maternity Stream of Sanctuary has more information on how people can help pregnant women. Women over seven months pregnant have the option to stay at the IAC until their child is born. For these mothers we also offer support baby clothes as well as the Welcome to the World pack. When we can, we offer decent second-hand prams. Having something new for your baby is a pleasure we take for granted.

Regardless of circumstances, children grow, clothes and shoes wear out. For all people in the first part of the asylum process, if you have no funds you cannot buy underwear, clothes or shoes. As a welcome to Wakefield, the Clothing Store offers a range of packs and tries to find items which people need or request. On principle, all underwear and socks are new for all ages. Offering a set of new clothes gives people dignity and is hugely beneficial to people's morale. The new clothes are basic and the secondhand clothes are usually classic rather than stylish, but they are clean and fresh. All the clothes, new or pre-loved, are donated. Some are donated through organizations: others are gifts from individuals. Other Cities of Sanctuary, such as Ripon and York, collect and deliver donations to the Clothing Store on a regular basis. All donations and gifts are really appreciated.

Visit to York



18 November 2017

Thank you to St Columba's United Reform Church, Friargate Quaker Meeting, York City of Sanctuary and the Wharfedale Trust for enabling this visit to take place.

We travelled by coach and five cars. There were 59 of us plus 10 volunteers from Doncaster, plus many from York.

| | |
|---------------------------|----|
| Kuwait | 5 |
| Zimbabwe | 1 |
| Democratic Republic Congo | 1 |
| Ivory Coast | 1 |
| Eritrea | 7 |
| Iran | 9 |
| Iraq | 2 |
| Jamaica | 1 |
| Afghanistan | 6 |
| Somalia | 2 |
| Syria | 3 |
| India | 4 |
| Sudan | 12 |
| Pakistan | 2 |
| Mauritius | 1 |
| Ethiopia | 2 |
| | |
| Total | 59 |



By Semhar Michael

England is a country which has got many historical places and places attractive to tourists. Now I am going to write about the trip on 18 November 2017 to one of the biggest and the oldest cities in England, called the City of York.

York is a 2000 year old city. It has a history and a legacy of religion, peace, war, power, wealth etc of the British and the people who live in the UK. The trip to York was arranged by the Meeting House (Conversation Club) and it took about one hour by bus from Doncaster. When we arrived there, a group of people from York served us a lunch which was absolutely delicious and paramount.

The main aim was to visit either the old train museum or to see the Castle museum. Therefore, straight after lunch we went in groups with two guides, one from Doncaster and one from York.



Then I saw a lot of things in the Castle Museum. First I realised how British people have registered a remarkable and dramatic change within a short period of time. Second, I appreciated how they transfer their lessons to their new generation. This is a phenomenon nowadays. Some of the things that I saw are old and modern kitchens, and the statue of the Roman king who declared an emperor in the city of York.

Next I learned the name of the shortest street with the longest name, named Whip-Ma-Whop-Ma Gate, and the narrow streets of York which are popular by different kind of tea

producers and the big church destroyed by fat King Henry VIII.

Finally I would like to thank all the people involved in this memorable event. I am glad to be residing in Doncaster.



Some further comments

First, thank you for everything. We helps us today. Today it was very amazing. I love the place. It was very cold but I have learned a lot of new names of the street and I saw old tools of the early ages, that were used many years ago. Finally I would like to say thank you for the persons that they served us a meal at the church. Thank you.

Today was one of the best days of my life. I have enjoyed a lot. We had lunch and after we visited York old street and it was amazing. I personally enjoyed a lot.

Today I had such a good time in York. Walking around, seeing so many interesting views. I really like the history of Yorkshire museum. York is very beautiful for visiting. I really appreciate the trip today and they are very organise. I hope we can visited some more places I haven't seen before. Thank you so much.

Today I had good time. Walk around city of York. I enjoy visiting the museum and I learn about British history. I am quite happy to see how the British they use to live before now. Have seen many interesting things about British. And we went to see Shambles market. Was quite good too.

York: The volunteer perspective



1. By Chris Hughes [York Friargate Meeting]

On Saturday 18th November we were delighted to host visitors from Doncaster Conversation Club on a visit to York. The sun was out to welcome them too and it was a lovely opportunity for us all to meet. Wendy Bennett and volunteer team ably cooked and organised a tasty lunch of spicy chickpea and spinach, rice and soup which all enjoyed in the United Reformed Church. We had a chance to chat over lunch and get to know each other a bit before dividing up into groups to see the beautiful city of York. All groups were accompanied by friends from York who could explain some of the history and quirky stories of our ancient city and we set off in bright sunlight to see the old streets, walk on the walls, discover the lives of our ancestors in the Yorkshire museum or the Castle Museum. Some groups also explored the National Railway Museum where they saw some of the earliest trains, peeked into the carriages of Queen Victoria and enjoyed seeing the curiosities such as the stuffed collecting dog which is still used to collect money for charity. We had time to stroll by the river and chat about our lives, to answer questions on both sides and for our visitors to practise their English. The time was too short – next time stay longer! Back on the bus at 4, we were sad to see you go and hope that you also have happy memories of your afternoon in York.

2. By Kaitlyn Golden [Time for God volunteer at St Columba's URC Church, York]

At 12 pm on Saturday, I stood in nervous excitement as person after person filed past me after their walk from the bus - I wondered how we were all going to fit into our Great Hall at St. Columba's. But an hour later, after enjoying good conversation over delicious curry and rice made by Wendy, I looked around in amazement. Almost everyone had a chair and we somehow fit!

The day continued to be a wonderful one. Everyone I talked to with the Doncaster Conversation Club was excited to be there and was so warm and kind. Your group impresses me in its size and also in its enthusiasm for the community you've built together! After lunch, the larger group split up into smaller ones to tour the city and visit the Castle Museum.

After a walk through the crowded city centre on cobblestone streets, we went to the Yorkshire Museum Gardens. We paused for lots of photos - some of us hammed it up more than others! While there, I was impressed by Josh's knowledge of British religious history as he described the dissolution of the monasteries in England in the 1500s. We went to the Minster and paused for a break in the sunshine to admire the views, as well as to examine the Constantine statue. I reflected on the fact that even though the individuals in my group were from all over the world, some historical events that have happened in York have shaped the growth of each of our countries of origin for hundreds or even thousands of years.

We made a stop for coffee for Mav and continued on through the Christmas Market. While Rasha wanted to push her brother, other members of our group insisted on taking their turns - Lucy, Basil, and Mav all wanted to help. I thought how hard it must be to let the brother that you love deeply literally be in the hands of someone else after coming

so far from home together and facing so much.

After once again navigating the crowds, we finally arrived at the Castle Museum. The Victorian Streets exhibit was a perfect thing to see after traipsing through York; it takes the visitor back in time to another era through interactive shops, streets, and displays of life in Victorian England. I remembered an experience I had going to a museum in a non-English speaking country and how it felt to not have a clue what was going on, so I was grateful for the variety of interesting exhibits that could appeal to everyone. The aids were very helpful to me and Delir as we navigated the lift and we enjoyed learning about World War I through images and mementos from soldiers.

I am in awe of the strength and resiliency of the refugees I met during this brief visit to York. More than that, it reminded me that while they all carry the label "refugee" each person is an individual with a story to tell. Thank you for coming to visit us. St. Columba's welcomes the Doncaster Conversation Club back to York anytime!



Minster Literacy Programme

... begins again on Wednesday 3 January 2018.

Every Wednesday at 13.00 at St George's House and Doncaster Minster. An opportunity for all to improve their written and spoken English.

Brief News Headlines

1. The Cemetery of Strangers in Tunisia

Chamseddine Marzoug, a fisherman in Zarzis, Tunisia, takes care of the 'Cemetery of Migrants' who died at sea and got washed to Tunisian shores.

Chames has buried hundreds of unidentified persons voluntarily during the last 12 years. There is an article about him in the LA Times: <http://www.latimes.com/world/africa/la-fg-tunisia-migrant-cemetery-20171126-story.html>. Due to strong recent rain fall, some graves were uncovered. He needed help to repair the damage done by the rain, and ordered two trucks of sand to cover the graves again. This is potentially an opportunity to plant some trees in the Cemetery - as an act of respect to the people buried there on a piece of land next to a rubbish dump. The trees would make this place look more like a graveyard and at the same time they would prevent further erosion due to rain or wind.

2. The deadly Mediterranean

The UN Migration Agency Missing Migrants Projects' update as of 26 November 2017 documented the topping of the benchmark of 3,000 people drowning in attempts to reach Europe via the Mediterranean Sea. Though the total figure of 3,033 deaths remains lower than the 4,757 drowning victims documented in the same period of 2016, the death rate increased considering the total number of arrivals of 163,979 (2017) and 348,591 (2016).

Analyzing patterns of trans-Mediterranean migration since the 1970s, the report 'Four Decades of Cross-Mediterranean Undocumented Migration to Europe' by the UN Migration Agency's Global Migration Data Analysis Centre (GMDAC) underlines that with 33,761 migrants reported death or missing between 2000 and 2017, the European Mediterranean border "is by far the

world's deadliest." The report highlights inter alia, the diversity of groups and reasons causing people to attempt irregular sea crossings and concludes that the rigid distinction between migrants and refugees in the context of Mediterranean migration is misunderstood given the common dangers of they face.

3. Prize for Inderjit Bhogal

City of Sanctuary's founder and national patron has been awarded this year's Wilson-Hinkes Peace Prize for his pioneering work in initiating the movement. The Wilson-Hinkes Peace Prize is awarded by an inter faith initiative, the Week of Prayer for World Peace (WPWP). The Peace Prize recognises significant contributions by individuals, organisations or projects in furthering peace, justice and reconciliation. Each year a different faith group sponsors the award. This year the Anglican Pacifist Fellowship is sponsoring the prize.

4. Sponsor Refugees: The Citizens UK Foundation for the Community Sponsorship of Refugees

The launch took place on the 9th October 2017 in the presence of more than 240 community leaders who came from across Britain. More than 25 organisations and community groups pledged to welcome 42 families through the community sponsorship scheme.

Community Sponsorship brings civil society right into the heart of refugee resettlement and integration. Experience shows that it is as good for host community as it is good for newcomers. Those who are keen to explore the Community Sponsorship scheme and need more info and support, please raise it with your local Citizens Organiser or get in touch direct at communitysponsorship@citizensuk.org

5. Unaccompanied minors

Britain accepted 200 unaccompanied minors in 2016, but has yet to bring

any more eligible refugee minors in 2017, leaving 280 available local authority places unfilled. Meanwhile, there are currently around 2,400 unaccompanied refugee children in Greece, less than half in official shelters.

FORTHCOMING DATES

10 December Human Rights Day

12 December DCC outing: Bowling

14 December HARP Conference, 9.30 – 16.30
Thackray Medical Museum, Leeds, LS9 7LN. The aims of this conference are to celebrate the achievements of the HARP programme, recognizing and publicly applauding the contribution of volunteers and clients; to disseminate learning and good practice; to raise awareness about barriers encountered by newly arrived asylum seekers and refugees in accessing health and wellbeing services; and to share our vision of a future model to improve access to health services.

14 December 6.30 – 8.30pm. Public meeting: Re-Imagining Brexit Britain: Reflections on the past, present and future. The Unity Centre, St Leonard's Road, Rotherham, S65 1PD. Organised by The Monitoring Group, supported by SYMAAG. Come, listen, learn and help build 'Communities of Solidarity'.

15 December 7pm – 11pm SYMAAG Social evening and fundraiser: St Andrews Church, Upper Hanover St, Sheffield S3 7RQ with food, music and dance from around the world

03 January Minster Literacy Project restarts

Book review

By Nic Burne

CITY OF THORNS Ben Rawlence ISBN 978 1 84627 587 6

This story starts in, of all places, the White House, Washington. Ben Rawlence, the author, had spent three years researching the refugee camps in Kenya. He had been summoned to address the National Security Council and, as he writes, expected to be listened to and asked for ideas of how the services could be improved. Big mistake! He stressed how the camps were thriving communities alive with initiative and enterprise making the most of a terrible situation. When the National Security Council heard that the camps were not schools for suicide bombers and hotbeds of potential terrorists, ie not a threat to the USA, they lost interest and ended the interview. 300,000 refugees not a problem! No further action needed!

From page 184... *The status quo in Dadaab is dependent upon not recognising the refugees as humans. Because to do so would be to acknowledge that they have rights.*

This book is a fascinating insight into the life of the camps through the lives of nine people. It is an inspiring and humbling story of how individuals can survive in the most hostile environment working for the good of others, motivated by the dreams of resettlement in the minority world. It is also a story of despair and resignation that highlights how destructive the lack of hope and of a better future can be to the human spirit and personal relationships. Ben brings his characters to life, they are not

numbers or statistics but people with hopes and dreams, needs for work, for family, for love and security.

Ben's research into their back stories adds a depressing dimension to the book. Many of his characters come from Mogadishu where they have survived by accepting as part of daily life, bombs and bullets, kidnapping (literally for child soldiers!), rape and torture and wanton destruction of infrastructure. The perpetrators of this violence are many from national armies often fighting over issues created in their colonial past to Al-Shabaab fighting for a bigoted anti-west version of a faith called Islam. Into all this come the international peace keeping forces who also have their own agendas behind the altruistic peace keeping. Ben's characters live with this, survive with this until the situation becomes impossible and they have nowhere in Mogadishu to go or hide. So they flee to the camps.

Ten days, fifteen days, walking though the desert to a place of safety where they dream they will be better off. In the camps they carve out an existence, some more successfully than others. Even with refugee status the tribal structure still has a strong influence on the human relationships and hierarchy. This is very destructive to any cohesive plan the Aid agencies may try to set up. The pressure and poverty are immense and there is often talk of returning – life in war torn Mogadishu would be better than in the camps! The fact that people have exhausted their ability and will to survive as a refugee however determined and resourceful they are is almost claustrophobic.

Into all this comes the Kenyan army offensive into Somalia, Al-Shabaab attacks on the Westgate Centre in Nairobi and the attacks in Mombasa. The Kenyan government uses these as a pretext to close the camps saying the terrorists are from them. They try to force Somalis back home to Somalia which is still a war zone. Al-Shabaab even bombs in the camps to create even more terror, uncertainty, confusion and causes the aid agencies to withdraw and so food hand outs and health care are reduced and suffering increases.

Corruption is endemic throughout the system from the aid agencies to the trading of food vouchers by the refugees, from politicians using refugees as pawns in a larger game to refugees bribing camp police and security guards (G4S!). Shocking though it is huge amount of aid money goes as bribes to Al-Shabaab with which they can buy arms otherwise food aid convoys could not get through to the camps!

This book addresses the issues of life as a refugee in a camp and relates them to national and international concerns. It is a very enlightening read. It is also very well written and accessible. I recommend it.

Poem

By Alfred Thananchayan

For a while I closed my eyes
In that beautiful darkness
I saw your face.

A view from the edge Doncaster Conversation Club Newsletter

Based at the

Quaker Meeting House

Off St James St

Doncaster DN1 3RH

To receive a copy of this newsletter by email, send a message to Paulfitzp@aol.com

Please send your contributions and suggestions to the same address.

Doncaster Conversation Club is one of many Conversation Clubs across the country which offer opportunities for local people and people who have come to live in the UK to join together to share friendship, while offering support and practical help.

The Club seeks to create a relaxed, friendly and supportive environment, and works on the principles of

Ownership – everyone can get involved

Impartiality – it is not affiliated to any political or religious body

Confidentiality – what you say is private

Respect – for each other's differences and individuality.

The Club is pleased to acknowledge the support of **Doncaster Society of Friends (Quakers), The Red Cross, The Refugee Council, Migrant Help, The Foyle Foundation, DIAL Doncaster, South Yorkshire Community Foundation, The Doncaster Clinical Commissioning Group, St Leger Homes, Club Doncaster Foundation, M25, Riverside Housing, DARTS, CAST, Fareshare, The Ruth Hayman Trust and Doncaster Minster.**

WharfedaleFoundation



The Doncaster Conversation Club is run entirely by volunteers with the support of occasional grants for specific activities, currently from the Allen Lane Foundation, and the Wharfedale Trust

The views expressed in this newsletter are those of the individual contributors.

Paul FitzPatrick

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Doncaster, South Yorkshire

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