



STANDING ALONGSIDE REFUGEES AND ASYLUM SEEKERS IN DONCASTER

# A view from the edge

## Doncaster Conversation Club Newsletter

06 February 2020

## IN THIS ISSUE

### Standing together

By Paul FitzPatrick

'It's been a year of crisis for refugees and indecision for many who should be stepping up to support them. Globally, the scale of the refugee crisis continues to grow. Yet in Europe and beyond, many countries have responded not with compassion but with border restrictions and hostile measures. Here in Britain our government made a new commitment to refugee resettlement but in all other areas political turbulence has severely limited progress.'

These are the opening words of Refugee Action's newly published annual report. In response, they recognise that some changes are required in their understanding of their mission, to ensure fundamental changes in the experience of people seeking asylum and in refugee integration. This transformation requires systemic changes.

Refugee Action is a national body, with a budget of millions of pounds, whereas DCC is a small local operation, but many of the challenges are the same. Refugee Action seeks to achieve change at local level, working with other organisations and influencing local and regional government. They wish to be directly shaped by those with lived experience of the asylum process and as a refugee in the UK. Consequently, they aspire to shift power to refugees and people seeking asylum so they influence both their own work and decisions made by government. Collaboration with others is essential to achieving these ambitious objectives.

To ensure that the voice of people seeking asylum is heard even in the production of this newsletter remains a challenge in itself. We need to continually reflect on how to stand together.



Baby dinosaurs

Page 3



Care for Calais

Page 2

## My personal experience of volunteering for Care4Calais

By Claire Langley [HARP Co-ordinator in Barnsley and Wakefield]

We headed from the port straight to the warehouse to deliver all your donations and start work. There's so much metal fencing, barbed wire and hostility in those few short miles between the sea and the people. Calais doesn't like you. Not one bit.

The warehouse is impressive. Clever little systems of organisation are in place and you quickly fall into them as if you've been there for years. The volunteers who arrived yesterday help you find your way and suddenly you are in the team.

Since 'The Jungle' was torn down the refugees have dispersed around the area into smaller groups making it harder for the charity and slowing them down in reaching everyone. The first day for us was a visit to BMX where mostly Eritreans gather. We travelled in convoy after the briefing on procedures and safety protocols. After a short distance into a seemingly empty space small numbers of people emerged as if from nowhere and waited for our vans to stop.

It was pouring with rain. Biblical rain, some would call it. And the wind. Oh my. Like ice. Everyone

jumps into action with their given task, paying no attention to what anyone else is doing. We are on gazebo and barbershop duty. Gazebo? What's that for? Keeping phones dry as they charge. I KNOW! There is a petrol powered generator and a piece of plywood with multiple 4 way sockets attached. It's full within seconds. The gazebo can't stand at full height, it's too windy so we push it back down half way and stumble around beneath it.

Two camping chairs are opened and the lads take the clippers, razors, scissors and mirrors from us. They drape the barber cape (is that what it's called?) on their shoulders and carefully cut and shave each other's hair. I can't believe what I am seeing. Out there, in the cold and rain under a bit of tarpaulin they cut and trim precise edges around ears, necks and beards. They are retrieving some dignity. I hope that's how it felt anyway. I admire everyone's work enthusiastically, nicknaming one lad Vidal Sassoon. He had no idea who we were talking about but played along.

After a while the wind and rain slowed and we were able to raise the gazebo and see that there were about 60 or 70 refugees just in that space around us. Someone had started a game of football. There should have been a talent scout watching. I'm not joking.

Another van was parked at the end. This time a team of Dutch

medics. The vehicle packed with all kinds of supplies. The main thing they had to treat was trench foot. I'll say that again. Trench foot. You can conjure your own images about that.

The youngest person I spoke to was 15 years old. He was smiling but broken and traumatised by his existence. They thank you and they shake your hand but all they really want to know is if you will take them. That's all they really need from you.

Do they try to climb into your car? You bet they do. They have nothing to lose at all. You beg them to stay safe and they laugh. They will try to cross that 30 mile stretch of water any way they can because if they die in the process it's better than dying a slow death there.

No amount of barbed wire or police brutality is going to stop them trying.



The next trip to Calais is taking place at the end of February, so Claire is trying to raise as much money as possible to help support the Care4Calais charity. Clothing donations are also welcome.

[http://www.facebook.com/donate/607772043394770/?scmt=swspssdd&extid=D9RFSMLE\\_E6A43ALX](http://www.facebook.com/donate/607772043394770/?scmt=swspssdd&extid=D9RFSMLE_E6A43ALX)

## Baby Dinosaurs support DCC!

By Lisa Hensby



Baby Dinosaurs is a highly popular, indoor one stop shop for quality new and pre-loved items for families across North Lincolnshire, East and South Yorkshire.

At our events shoppers can expect nearly new items from maternity wear to baby and children's outfits, toys, essentials and more, up to the age of 10, all under one roof.

Savvy shoppers can come along and pick up a bargain between 80-90% off retail prices, while sellers find a new home for their little ones treasured items and make some extra pocket money along the way. Not only can you make a difference to the community and environment by recycling items and helping others but you can also have that much needed clear out to make more space. As well as giving your unwanted items to local families in need.

However Baby Dinosaurs not only organises baby & child related markets and other events, such as Bump To Junior Exhibition, Children's Inspirational Awards and more but we also host a huge yearly Christmas Gift Appeal called All Wrapped UP.

This time of year can be an extremely stressful time for parents and guardians. So helping take away some of that pressure and bring smiles to babies, children and teenagers faces, we will always do our upmost to make that happen. Unfortunately some children wake up on Christmas morning with nothing to receive but with our help and intervention, Baby Dinosaurs will not let that happen.

Our first appeal in Christmas 2018, gave 539 children (newborn – teenagers) gifts in North Lincolnshire and Yorkshire. Christmas 2019 was our aim to triple that figure. We worked extremely hard to collaborate with over 80 businesses, including local and national.

With nearly 90 different drop off locations points throughout Lincolnshire and Yorkshire, where brand new toys/ gifts where given, for us to give to our nominated families in your area. All gifts donated in an area, stayed in which referrals were given.

We have used our contacts from Baby Dinosaurs donations, to receive referrals from local councils, children charities, schools and health care professionals to ensure we could help as many families as possible. Every professional involved in the appeal sent us a referral of name, age, gender and area of the families in their care. That way we know we could cover every single child with the appropriate gift and ensure no one is left out.

Our process is like no other not only do we collect the toys but we also give it that Baby Dinosaurs personalised touch. We hold special wrapping days, to wrap them, gift tag and bow each present individually to give it that special touch for a child who won't receive a present this Christmas.

By using our social media platforms and contacts we have brought together a huge gift appeal to help these families at Christmas. With the hard work and dedication we are so proud to announce, that we have given 2397 children a gift this Christmas 2019.

Baby Dinosaurs would like to say a huge thank you to all families that donated gifts, the volunteers and all the businesses who helped spread the word about our gift appeal. We will always be forever grateful for your help and support. We are over the moon with the support we have received by our followers and can't thank everyone enough. Together we have made a huge impact on so many children's lives this Christmas. If you would like more information about Baby Dinosaurs please visit our website and social media platforms.

[www.babydinosaurs.co.uk](http://www.babydinosaurs.co.uk)

FB: @babydinosaurskids

Insta: @babydinosaurs1

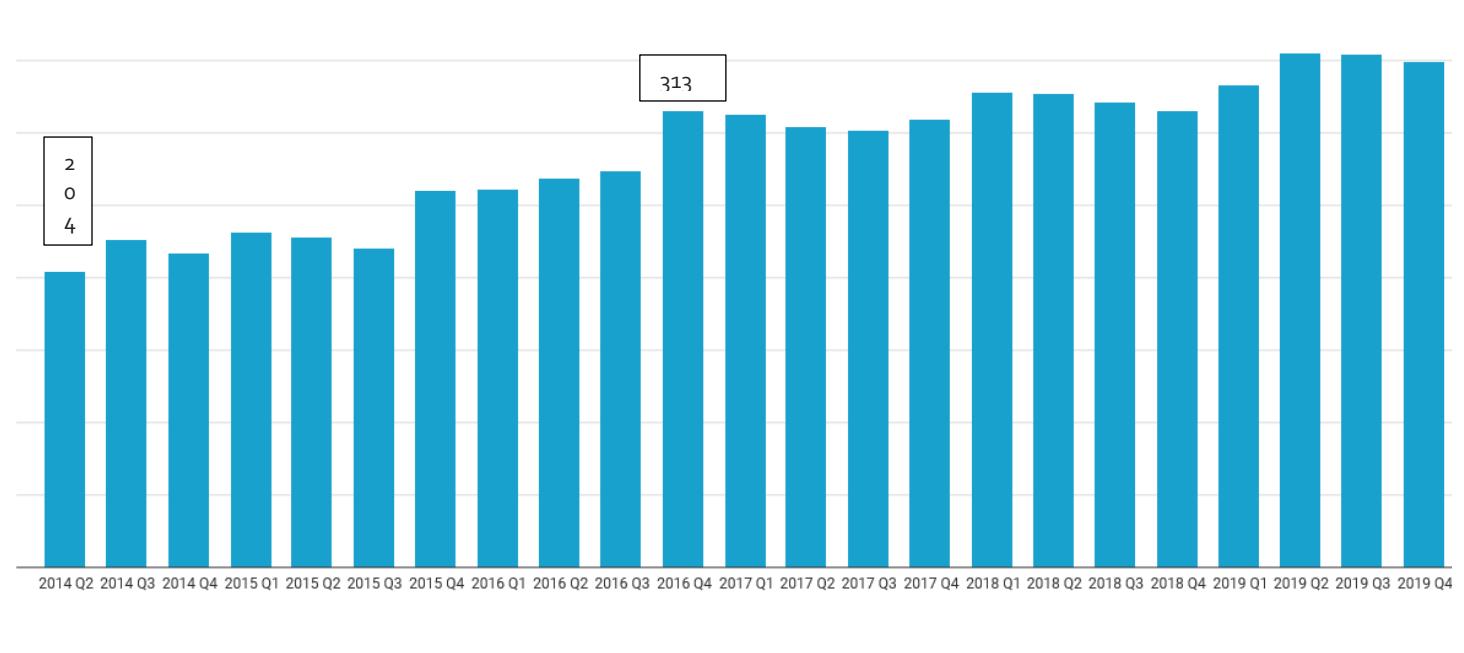
And DCC gratefully acknowledges the support of Baby Dinosaurs, who supplied 50 presents for children at events around Christmas time.

Some data on Doncaster.

The figure for Q2 2014 was 204,  
and for Q4 2019 was 349.

## Number of people in receipt of Section 95 Support

### Doncaster 2014 - 2019



Map: Andy Hewett Consultancy Source:  
[Home Office Quarterly Stats Map](#) data: ©  
 Crown copyright and database right 2018  
[Get the data](#) Created with Datawrapper

### Map of 150 Newly Elected MPs and Asylum/ Resettlement Data

Since the General Election, 150 new MPs have just entered Parliament, many of whom we'll be looking to engage with on asylum and migration issues. [Andy Hewett](#) has produced [an excellent map](#) showing each of the 150 first-time MPs mapped against the relevant Home Office data for asylum dispersal (people on section 95 support), and resettlement under both the Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme (VPRS) and Vulnerable Children's Resettlement Scheme (VCRS). If you hover over a constituency, it will show you the relevant data. You can also view the data online in a table format [here](#). You can rank columns in the table by clicking on the column header and then clicking the small up/down arrows. This should help when identifying MPs who have a population of people seeking asylum and resettled refugees in their constituency.

# DCC UNITED TRAVEL TO BURNLEY FOR 'FOOTBALL WELCOMES' TOURNAMENT

Club Doncaster Foundation's Football Welcomes team (DCC United) travelled to Burnley FC on Friday 17 January to play in a tournament for teams of people seeking asylum supported by professional football clubs.



Doncaster Rovers and the Foundation have been supporting DCC United by providing pitch space and coaching, while fans of Rovers and Belles fans have also been donating football boots, but this was the first time the team had been invited to play against teams from similar projects.

There were eight teams in total with Derby County, Everton and Burnley FC making up Rovers group, while a second Burnley team joined Liverpool, AFC Fylde, and Hull City in group B.

Rovers finished in the top two qualifying for the semi-finals where they narrowly lost out 4-2 to AFC Fylde.

The team had a great time at the tournament enjoying competitive matches and socialising off the field.

Club Doncaster Foundation would like to thank Burnley FC for their hospitality on congratulate Liverpool FC on winning the competition.

## 'FOOTBALL WELCOMES' BOOT DRIVE GOES INTERNATIONAL



Club Doncaster's boot drive in aid of the Foundation's Football Welcomes project went international last week when a cheque from Australia was delivered to the Keepmoat Stadium.

Paul Edward Jeffer is a lifelong Doncaster Rovers fan who emigrated down under a few years ago. Paul still follows the club's activity online and, after reading news about the *Football Welcomes*

project, decided he wanted to support the boot drive. Unable to send boots himself, he sent a cheque for the equivalent of \$100 AUD to be used to support the project and purchase proper footwear for people seeking asylum. Jim Duffy – who is known to many people around Club Doncaster due to his fantastic work with the Fans4Foodbanks initiative – brought the monetary donation to the stadium on behalf of Paul and a bag of boots which he donated himself.

Lauren Cuttell, Foundation project leader for *Football Welcomes*, said: 'Every pair of boots donated means so much to the team. It really helps people seeking asylum in Doncaster feel welcome and feel part of our football family.'

'For Paul to feel so strongly about the project that he's sent money from Australia is an amazing and generous gesture means a lot to me and everyone who is part of the Football Welcomes project.'

The Football Welcomes project is run by the Foundation in partnership with Amnesty International and aims to use the power of football to ensure people seeking asylum in Doncaster feel welcome.



*Training under the lights*

## Living in limbo

By Alfred Thananchayan

I was cried  
I was feared

I was proud  
I was humbled

I was sick  
I was active

I was loved  
I was hated

I was hailed  
I was jailed

I was cornered  
I was empowered

I was encouraged  
I was envied

I was admired  
I was ridiculed

I was welcomed  
I was blocked

I was praying  
I was sinning

I was hugged  
I was kicked

I was sober  
I was drunk

I was fired  
I was appointed

I was earning  
I was borrowing

I was kissed  
I was slapped

I was believed  
I was betrayed

Life is changing minute to minute  
Otherwise life is boring.

### FORTHCOMING DATES

**09 February** Football match involving DCC United and Fit

Rovers: 3pm at the Keepmoat Stadium

**15 February** City of Sanctuary Yorkshire and Humberside Gathering Leeds

**17 February** Swimming at the Dome 2pm

**22 February** Celebrating Sanctuary: Sheffield Quaker Meeting House 4-8pm

**25 February** Launch of *Together* campaign in Leeds

Although longer follow-up is needed to determine the long-term effects of the intervention, the authors say that guided self-help could be a promising first-line strategy to address the vast gap in mental health support in areas where humanitarian access is difficult, such as South Sudan and Syria.

Source: *The Lancet Global Health*

### 2. Drones will monitor migrant boats attempting to reach the south east of England

Remotely-piloted aircraft will be searching a large area of the Channel, from Eastbourne to Margate.

The flights are for 'the purpose of national security and protection of human life', the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) said.

The Home Office said it was working to identify the 'most effective' ways to "ackle small boat crossings".

More than 1,700 people have crossed the Channel since the government declared a "major incident" on 28 December 2018.

Source: *BBC 5 Dec 2019*

### 3. Alarm phone in the Aegean

In 2019, 223 boats in distress called the Alarm Phone in the Aegean Sea.

Between Friday the 24th and Monday the 27th of January 2020, the Alarm Phone was alerted to nine boats in distress in the Central Mediterranean Sea. There were approximately 650 people on board and they all succeeded in their struggle to escape war-torn and torturous Libya and reached Europe. Seven of these boats were rescued by the Civil Fleet, four by the Ocean Viking, two by the Open Arms, and one by the Alan Kurdi. Two of them were rescued by the Armed Forces of Malta in the Maltese SAR Zone, after the Maltese authorities delayed rescue procedures. In other cases authorities did not even react to distress calls which we forwarded to them.

Source: *Alarm Phone*

## Brief news headlines

### 1. Guided self-help intervention reduces refugees' psychological distress and improves wellbeing in humanitarian crises

A guided self-help approach that provides strategies for managing distress and coping with adversity is safe, and resulted in meaningful improvements in psychological distress and functioning compared to enhanced usual care over three months in female refugees living in a settlement in Uganda, according to a randomised trial involving almost 700 South Sudanese refugee women, published in *The Lancet Global Health* journal.

The study is the first randomised trial of a guided self-help group intervention in a low-resource humanitarian setting.

## Letter From Zimbabwe

By Cathy Buckle

It never rains but it pours in Zimbabwe. Having melted through weeks of unbearable heat with temperatures over 38 degrees Celsius, the rain finally moved into Zimbabwe with high winds, deep purple clouds and pounding rain. In some places storms of 150 mm (6 inches) of rain were recorded in a couple of hours. One such place was Hwange where our biggest thermal power plant is; 135 mm of rain in a couple of hours flooded the town and the power station. Our lights that usually only come on in the middle of the night didn't come on at all for a couple of days until things dried out and then we went back to our normal abnormal state of 18 hour a day power cuts. Meanwhile flying ants swarmed out of the baked ground in their millions and mushrooms appeared from nowhere growing at a speed almost as fast as our government finds ways of making money for themselves.

This week our government got off the hook with regard to their obligation to pay doctors the same salary they were earning a year ago. Zimbabwean Strive Masiyiwa and his Higher Life Foundation, has established a fund that will pay junior doctors US\$300 a month for the next six months. Tawanda Zvakada, spokesman for the Zimbabwe Hospital Doctors Association said: "This is not a long-lasting solution but this is an opportunity for our members to go back to work and finish their training."

While this deal was being finalized our Supreme Court ruled this

week that all debts incurred before the 22<sup>nd</sup> Feb 2019 will be settled in the local currency on a US\$1 to Z\$1 basis. The ruling was made by Chief Justice Luke Malaba, the same Judge who ruled that Mr Mnangagwa won Zimbabwe's 2018 disputed, contested election. In the week that Justice Malaba made the currency/debt ruling, the bank rate for US\$1 was Z\$17 and the black market rate was US\$1 for Z\$25.

To put Justice Malaba's ruling into context: if someone owed you US\$100 in Feb 2019, they can now pay you back \$100 Zimbabwe Bond dollars which today is only worth the equivalent of US\$4, not quite enough to buy three mangoes in the supermarket. The Supreme Court ruling was made in response to an appeal over a US\$3.8 million debt owed by Zambezi Gas to N. Barber which is now to be paid in Zimbabwe dollars and worth only US\$145,000.

Undoubtedly this ruling will mostly benefit the well connected and the political elite, because who else can access such huge debt in a bankrupt country? Borrow a million, pay back fifty thousand. What a bargain for Zimbabwe's big borrowers; they must be rubbing their hands in glee. Legal commentator Alex Magaisa calls this the 'great heist.' The rest of us just shake our heads at the disgrace. What a tragedy for Zimbabwe's lenders who have overnight lost 95% of their money. They have been reduced to paupers like the rest of us since the Zanu PF government changed US dollars to Zimbabwe Bond dollars eleven months ago.

Meanwhile while our government is off the hook with doctors and off the hook with debts, so far they're doing nothing realistic about the teachers who are earning the equivalent of US\$40 a month and can't afford to do their jobs. When a school teacher and 153 students in Bulawayo held a demonstration this week to highlight the absence of teachers and the huge school fee increases, police launched a manhunt for the teacher who had by then gone into hiding. Bulawayo biology teacher Brian Mutsiba subsequently released a letter which reads in part: "The presence of officials from the President's Office, Military Intelligence and Prisons intelligence on that fateful day is testimony enough to say there are threats on my life." If there was any doubt about the need for the demonstration by Mr Mutsiba and 153 students from Njube High school, the Zimbabwe Schools Examination Council announcement this week says it all: there was only a 31.6% pass rate in November's 'O' Level exams. There's a shameful irony about a manhunt for a biology teacher when teachers can't afford to go to work and children can't afford to go to school.

We are left asking who will bail out Zimbabwe's teachers and who will then bail out Zimbabwe's police where a constable earns just US\$43 a month and then the soldiers, nurses and never ending list of people after that. Isn't this what governments are supposed to do with the taxes we pay them?

# 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](mailto:Paulfitzp@aol.com)

Please send your contributions and suggestions to the same address.

**Doncaster Conversation Club** offers opportunities for local people and people who have sought asylum 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.**

DCC is pleased to acknowledge the support of **Doncaster Society of Friends (Quakers), The Red Cross, The Refugee Council, Migrant Help, DIAL Doncaster, The Doncaster Clinical Commissioning Group, St Leger Homes, Club Doncaster Foundation, Ongo M25 Services, YMCA, DARTS, CAST, Fareshare, The Brelms Trust, The Ruth Hayman Trust and Doncaster Minster.**

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**

Doncaster Conversation Club  
Doncaster, South Yorkshire

Registered Charity number 1159775

**Issue 62**

06 February 2020

