

Draft case studies for LCRF 2024 Annual Report

H, a young survivor from Afghanistan, came to Baobab Centre for Young Survivors in Exile after he became homeless following a lack of care from the responsible local authority. Baobab's destitution fund enabled them to respond and find him temporary accommodation. When Social Services eventually responded he was placed outside London, far from any sort of cultural or religious community, without access to education, for more than six months. Baobab provided support to ensure he was moved near their services where he was receiving casework and psychotherapeutic support.

On the run-up to his 18th birthday, H's life was extremely unstable, and he suffered great anxiety about the withdrawal of social service support after he turned 18. However Baobab provided him with support in engaging in community activities, including providing running shoes to train and complete the London half marathon, an important part of his rehabilitation. Their destitution fund enabled him to acquire steel-capped boots for a carpentry course, at which he excelled and gave a huge boost to his confidence and his ability to plan ahead.

A year into being supported by Baobab, H is in a much better situation. He recently got asylum, and is settled in North London attending his carpentry course. He has a new-found self-confidence, is regularly attending youth clubs, and has even spoken twice in Parliament as part of Baobab's advocacy work.

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When Action for Refugees in Lewisham (AFRIL)'s caseworkers first met the S family, all six members were sharing a double room. When one of the children developed chickenpox it immediately spread, and the parents

were caring for a seven year old, a five year old and one year old twins. In addition, the children were refusing to eat the food in their asylum hotel because it was of such poor quality. The parents had no income to purchase nutritious food for their children because a Home Office error had caused their Aspen card to be blocked, so they could not access the asylum support income they were entitled to. This resulted in their five year old daughter becoming malnourished, and health visitors and doctors in A&E confirming that the parents needed to purchase healthy food.

Thanks to the LCRF grant, AFRIL were able to provide an emergency payment to purchase nutritious food that the children were able to eat and enjoy.

Meanwhile AFRIL worked to resolve the ASPEN card issues to ensure the family received their asylum support income, and also supported them to access suitably sized asylum accommodation in London while they waited for the result of their asylum claim.

Without the provision of the emergency payment, the health consequences for the children would have been severe. In addition, knowing that they could put food on the table for their children relieved a significant amount of stress and anxiety for the parents, meaning that they had much more energy and capacity to engage with their AFRIL caseworker to resolve their income and housing issues.

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T came to the UK to seek sanctuary from war in Sudan and did not expect to be held indefinitely in prison-like detention. He spoke little English, and did not understand why he was detained or the steps he should take for release. Gatwick Detainees Welfare Group (GDWG) assisted him to

connect with good quality legal and medical advice, provided interpretation services, phone credit and clothes for the basic dignity of a change of clothing. While he was in detention the man in the next door cell tried to hang himself and T was deeply traumatised by the event, experiencing flashbacks and insomnia, and expressing suicidal ideation. GDWG offered him emotional support through one of their trained volunteer visitors. T told them: "I ran away from death in my country. But with what is going on here, I don't know how I will survive without you."

After release, T was sent to a London borough where he knew no-one, and had no access to food due to Home Office delays in provision. GDWG provided him with £35 supermarket vouchers for three months, and connected him with a local food bank. T told them: "Without a voucher I will be starving myself for days and feeling bad about myself. But the voucher gave me back my freedom." GDWG gave T phone credit, so that he could stay in touch with his volunteer visitor, solicitor and GDWG, and helped him to access online ESOL classes whilst he was prohibited from attending college.

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F, a Lebanese single mother and her young son, faced many challenges in their asylum journey, including inadequate food provision in their asylum accommodation. Cotton Tree Trust (CTT) provided her with supplementary food vouchers and ensured she had access to the internet as there was none available in her asylum accommodation. She remained actively engaged with CTT, participating in community gatherings and monthly

lunches, which provided her with a sense of belonging and support during an incredibly challenging time.

After receiving her refugee status, she wrote: “Cotton Tree Trust is my family in London. The team offered me a safe space to navigate the hard times I faced as an asylum seeker. They listened with friendship and respect, helping us every step of the way. We were living in a shared house full of rats, and they tirelessly worked with the landlord and Migrant Help until the issue was resolved. After my son and I received residency, I was homeless, but Cotton Tree guided us through the entire process, helping me from A to Z. No words can fully capture the support they provided. We had monthly lunches with the Cotton Tree community, they gave gifts and clothes to our children, and even covered travel costs. We attended Christmas parties where we enjoyed delicious food, singing and dancing, which had a positive effect on our well-being, especially for the children. They truly cared for us like a real family.”

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N’s journey to the UK, after being forced to flee persecution in his native Iran, was extremely traumatic, and he now lives with PTSD as a result of his experiences. He approached Refugee Migrant Forum of Essex and London (RAMFEL) for help applying for his two young children, aged 7 and 11, to join him in the UK via refugee family reunion. Thanks to RAMFEL’s assistance, N’s children have now safely joined him in the UK, and the family are being safely housed in temporary council accommodation. Due to delays in the DWP responding to his benefits claim, N spent months without income, but

thanks to LCRF funding RAMFEL were able to give N and his family supermarket vouchers to ensure they did not go hungry.

A and his sister D, from Sudan, spent many months travelling to get to a safe place. They came to the African Refugee Community (ARC) after seeking asylum, needing support to get a lawyer, and to register with a GP and college. One of ARC's volunteers worked closely with them, providing emotional support as well as advocacy. They had no money or warm clothes, but the volunteer worked with social services and statutory and voluntary agencies to provide them with basic items to survive. ARC assisted them with food, vouchers to buy clothes and shoes, and phone and travel cards. Today they have been granted asylum and have decent accommodation. They go to college, and have started engaging with life in different communities. According to ARC, "they feel safe, loved, and are doing their best to rebuild their future. Without your financial support, I do not think they could have made it."

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P was a well-known disability activist in Sierra Leone, campaigning for the rights of other disabled people. When a new government came to power, P's life, home and family were put in danger and he had to flee. Seeking asylum in the UK was a difficult process for P. As a blind person he struggled to find accommodation, buy food, and get the support he needed. The Refugee Council's Destitution Service (RC) supported P by providing him with food vouchers, connecting him with a housing solicitor,

and setting him up on their refugee counselling programme. Now I'm in a secure place to live, with enough to eat in the evening. I can focus my efforts on rebuilding my life, finding employment, and being a voice for people who have experienced similar challenges."

P now has refugee status and is studying International Development Studies at Birkbeck University. He continues to advocate for refugee and disability rights.

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When O came to the Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS UK) he had been moving around different places in the UK after having missed a Home Office deadline to appeal his initial refusal because of slow internet connections in his local library. "I spent two months with no phone, and no access to the internet, two months of total isolation and disconnection." Without internet, O found himself disconnected from everything, from the Home Office, from legal advice, from English classes, from his GP, and from family and friends.

Thanks to a grant from LCRF, JRS UK were able to give O vouchers for mobile credit and internet data. "

The vouchers are special for me. They allow me to keep in touch with my family and my friends, and my solicitor. I use the data to access my college course, for doing my homework, for sending emails and booking essential appointments."

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Two young refugees had been sleeping outside Limehouse station before they came to Hackney Night Shelter (HNS). They were very anxious, both being young women from Eritrea who were sticking together for safety. They stayed with HNS for about two months until their benefits came through, and HNS could support them to move into a women's project in Islington. During this time HNS used some of their LCRF grant to cover their essential travel costs. The young women were extremely grateful.

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The Separated Child Foundation (SCF) distribute arrival packs for separated children and young people who often arrive with only the clothes they stand up in. The arrival pack is a duffel bag containing toiletries, a towel, a hoodie and joggers, a weatherproof jacket and hat, gloves and scarf, socks, tops, underwear and sliders and a notepad and pen. "A lot of the young people we see arrive dirty, with few or no belongings.``` At a time when this country becomes more and more hostile to the most vulnerable people in need of safety, it means a lot to show these children that they are not alone, they are cared for and welcomed."

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The Co-ordinator of Croydon Refugee Day Centre (CRDC) first met D and her younger daughter J at an outreach session at their asylum hostel, not long after they entered the country. It took two more weeks before she met R, her teenage daughter, who was struggling with anxiety over leaving their hostel room, after traumatic experiences in her country of origin.

CRDC supported with school applications for both children. J received a primary school place quickly, and CRDC helped with school uniform and essential clothing. When it became clear that R would not receive a school place for several months, CDRC arranged a referral to a specialist programme for out of school girls with English as a second language, and supported R with introductions, suitable clothing and travel costs. R later said “Me and my mother was very worried about getting a (school) place. Then we met the CRDC Co-ordinator . I was nervous at first because I don’t know what a school is like, because I have never been to it. Then she put me in (specialist provision) which helped me in this problem. It improved my English and maths, and I became more confident. They also took us to many famous places in London and made us do different activities which was so good”.