

2019 ANNUAL REPORT, LCRF, Case Studies

Original versions as submitted by projects we support

C was targeted by the government of her native Democratic Republic of Congo for exposing corruption. She was working with a charity that promoted equality and justice, and as a result was detained, beaten and raped by soldiers. After escaping from detention, she made her way to the UK, where a doctor referred her to Freedom from Torture (FfT). As an asylum-seeker she is not allowed to work and has to survive on just £36.95 a week. One very rainy day she came to her therapy appointment at FfT's London treatment centre wearing flip flops on her feet. She explained to her therapist that these were the only shoes she had. Her therapist applied to FfT's relief fund for a small grant so that she could buy herself some more suitable shoes. C said to FfT "the people that help this organization must be people with very big hearts. I pray for them. I hope they are granted their every wish."

F fled to the UK from Africa. After arriving in the UK, he was detained twice in immigration detention centres, exacerbating his very poor mental health. He suffered from nightmares, had difficulty sleeping and struggled to trust people. After he was referred to Room to Heal (RtH), he was able to receive specialist and tailored therapeutic support, as well as gardening activities and freshly cooked meals. RtH provided an expert therapeutic report which was crucial evidence in F's asylum claim, and after 10 years F was finally granted refugee status. RtH's caseworkers helped him to access self-contained, secure accommodation, and a grant to allow him to buy a bed, table, chairs and a microwave. More recently, they have supported F with his successful university application, laying the foundation for paid work in the future.

D, an asylum seeker in a hostel, suffers from sickle cell disease and end stage kidney failure. She is on constant medication and undergoes dialysis three times a week. Administrative errors caused her ASPEN card to be deactivated, and she had no money for five weeks so was unable to buy food or essential items, so had to rely on the food bank. She had to borrow money from other tenants at the hostel to pay for her transportation costs to the hotel, and owes them £90. In addition, she was wrongly charged for her prescriptions on three occasions. Unable to pay, each time she incurred a penalty fine of £45 in addition to her prescription costs. The combination of malnutrition and excessive medication has had a detrimental impact on her health. Action for Refugees in Lewisham (AFRIL) supported D to seek help. Her ASPEN card was reactivated, and back payments from the outstanding Section 95 support were paid. AFRIL made a referral to Doctors of the World who helped D to challenge the NHS charging and penalty fee. She is now debt free.

Mr X, married with three children, came to the UK from the DRC. His initial application for asylum was refused and appealed against the Home Office to the Asylum Immigration Tribunal, but again was turned down. The Home Office stopped all his support, including cash payment and accommodation. He became homeless with his children, and social services did not want to assist them. He decided to move to London with his family, and started living in different places belonging to friends. The family became divided, his wife and children living in one place while he slept in a night shelter. African Refugee Community (ARC) provided him with some money for food, fares, phone cards, warm clothing and hygiene packs, and instructed a solicitor to help him with his fresh claim. He has recently been granted refugee status, offered accommodation and has applied for benefits. He has registered with ARC as a volunteer to support others. He is very grateful for LCRF's support which has enabled him to reunite his family and rebuild his life.

M sought help from Praxis with her immigration and housing issues. She was pregnant and had recently escaped from a violent relationship where she had been held by an ex-partner. She was in unstable accommodation and at times street homeless. Praxis referred M to a solicitor to progress her asylum claim, and helped her to find further support, including food banks and children's services. The LCRF grant enabled Praxis to give her some money for travel expenses, as well as an additional grant to cover basic needs for her and her new-born baby.

B came to the London Jesus Centre (LJC) for English classes, and felt hopeless because of depression. LJC supported her to access immigration advice, and gave her the confidence to explain her situation fully. She is now an asylum-seeker, housed in NASS accommodation, and in much better mental health. She has also got a bike, through a referral to the Bike Project.

A family of Coptic Christians, with a boy of 12 and twin girls of 9, had been living in a single room for some time, and were going "stir-crazy". They had no money and the children were not enrolled in school. A volunteer brought them to the Croydon Refugee Day Centre (CRDC), where they immediately separated. The boy ran to the art table and joined in, one of the twins ran to a doll's house and began playing and the other twin joined in a game at the supervised children's play area. Mum asked if she could help in the kitchen, and Dad took himself off for a walk! A very loving family But they all just needed a break from each other. The LCRF grant paid for their fares, enabling them to visit three times before they were dispersed to Essex.

The mobile phone top-ups that LCRF provides can facilitate crucial connections. A young man visited Article 1; he had lost contact with his family, who were still in an IDP camp in Sudan, for many years. Through its network of contacts, Article 1 spoke to the camp chairman or sheikh, who found the young boy's family and put them back in touch. The minimal phone fee enabled him to tell his family, for the first time, that he was alive and safe. Such an experience is priceless.

R is a victim of trafficking who was held in domestic servitude and sexually abused. After escaping, she was taken in by her church and supported by a member of the congregation while she waited for the outcome of her asylum application. She is living with her friend and her husband and four children, all in a small flat. Unable to work until the outcome of her application had been determined, R is completely dependent on her host family. Hackney Migrant Centre (HMC) gave R £20 so that she could cover her own food and transport for a short time as they worked towards longer-term support for her.

A has been depending on the help given by Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) for more than a year, ever since the Home Office stopped his support. Like many other asylum seekers, A feels the isolation created by the harsh asylum policies within the hostile environment. With no financial support or permission to work, A cannot afford to call his family members back in Sudan, which is causing him more distress. He describes the phone top-up vouchers given by JRS at Christmas as a "very vital factor in keeping my hopes and dreams high, as it is my only way of keeping in touch with loved ones back home. Whenever I get a chance to speak to one of my family, it gives me the patience and strength to keep moving forward during these harsh conditions I am facing."