

How your donations helped

Case studies for 2018 annual report, original versions

K was imprisoned and tortured because of the opposition songs he wrote to protest against corruption in his country. When he came to Room to Heal (RtH) he was destitute, had no legal representation and had lost all hope in change. Through casework support he obtained legal representation, evidence for his case, and hosting when he was homeless. Through participation in RtH's therapeutic groups he started to write and play music again. After RtH's attendance in court he won his refugee status and has embarked on a Masters in Music. He is also mentoring newer members of RtH.

Ms P, originally from the Democratic Republic of Congo, was at real risk of becoming street homeless, which would have left her particularly vulnerable, given her physical and mental health. Islington Centre for Refugees and Migrants (ICRM) were able to obtain accommodation for her through Refugees at Home. Her host kindly provided her with a room but travelled away regularly, without always being in a position to provide food for Ms P during these periods. ICRM provided emergency food grants from time to time, thanks to the support of the Fund.

H & N, a Syrian couple, came to the UK when N was heavily pregnant. When they approached Action for Refugees in Lewisham (AFRIL), they were still in the immigration progress, seeking Leave to Remain and with no recourse to public funds. Their son was born while they were in a hostel, and the Fund's grant enabled them to buy food for themselves and their baby, to clothe him and to buy a cot and push chair. Since then, their immigration status has been determined and they have been housed by the local authority and are able to claim benefits. For many months H travelled across London to do voluntary work at AFRIL, but eventually he was able to find work and to provide for his family. This ability to step in at short notice with small scale assistance gives clients an opportunity to overcome some of their immediate difficulties.

Since **A**, from East Africa, first came to Akwaaba (Ak), he has been a highly valued member of the volunteer team. As one of Ak's kitchen supervisors, A, who has extensive experience of chef work, regularly manages a small team of volunteers, preparing a meal for 100-150 people every Sunday. Through Akwaaba, A recently completed a Level 2 Food Hygiene Certificate and participated in the Olive Course, a programme at the University of East London which prepares asylum seekers for higher education in the UK. Every week, when he finishes his volunteer shift, A attends Ak's advanced level English course. He is ambitious and hopes to attend university in the UK when his asylum application is resolved. Without the weekly travel bursary, A would not have been able to participate almost every week for nine months.

R is a survivor of torture from Afghanistan who fled to the UK. As an asylum seeker he is barred from working, and delays in the asylum process meant that he was left with no financial support at all for some time. His therapist applied to Freedom from Torture (FFT)'s

relief committee for emergency help , and FfT were able to give him £30 a week for six weeks so that he could survive. His therapist said: “It didn’t just give him sustenance, it gave him dignity during a very difficult and frightening time.”

Croydon Refugee Day Centre (CRDC) used part of our grant to contribute to a client’s fares to Liverpool so that he could make a fresh claim in person. The man had struggled as a refused asylum-seeker for more than five years, and his mental health had deteriorated. Now that he has made a fresh claim, CRDC are supporting his application for Section 4 support, and IS helping with his fares to attend mental health appointments. Responding to a huge increase in the number of pregnant women attending the Centre, they have also used the grant to help to set up a new non-statutory peri-natal service for asylum-seekers in initial accommodation. This is an informal partnership with the National Childbirth Trust, Home Start, and others to provide advice and support to complement that offered by statutory services. More than 20 women attend each week.

K is an Iranian man aged about 40 whose health has severely deteriorated due to homelessness. He has attended the Southwark Day Centre for Asylum Seekers (SDC) for many years, but when his asylum claim was refused, he became extremely vulnerable and would not engage well with the SDC team or other agencies when his temporary accommodation ceased and his social network from his community reduced. He received advice, support, food and clothing from SDC but slept rough during the really cold weather of 2017. Due to his poor mental health after a breakdown he was admitted to hospital for three weeks and then discharged back on the streets. His poor mental health meant that he could not be referred to hosting schemes, but Mental Health Assessments failed to recognise him as being ill. SDS made an application for Asylum Support. This took some time to process, but eventually he was put in the temporary accommodation centre. He continues to use SDC for support and shows slow signs of improvement.

Ms Z aged 20 from Somalia was trafficked in the UK as an unaccompanied minor aged 16, and kept in isolation for many years. She was raped and forced into prostitution by her agents and advised not to try to escape otherwise her family back home would be in trouble. She was fearful, and suffering in silence, until one day she managed to run away. She made an application for asylum, but when that was refused she lost her accommodation and financial support. When she came to the African Refugee Community (ARC) she was homeless, disoriented and suffering from severe depression.

ARC supported her financially with food vouchers, transport costs, hygiene packs and phone cards. She also received advocacy, and is now in contact with a GP, mental health counsellor and a solicitor to help with her Fresh Claim application. She now feels happy when she comes to the ARC office to collect her hardship payment, and her mental, social and physical well-being is improving gradually because of the support she receives.

Ms E first came to the Black Women's Rape Action Project (BWRAP) self-help sessions after being encouraged by a friend. She was living scared of the Home Office and didn't understand the refusal letter she had been sent. Having fled Malawi in fear of her family who had abused her when they found she was having a relationship with another woman, she was terrified of being returned and could not believe she has been rejected. She was traumatised, couldn't sleep, and didn't have the confidence to speak for many months. As she gradually opened up, BWRAP were able to give her practical support and advice.

In December 2017 Ms E announced that she had won her case and celebrated by singing triumphantly, backed up joyfully by her fellow members of the self-help group. She detailed how the self-help guide and sessions on writing a case summary and using the Gender Guidelines in an asylum claim were invaluable to her understanding, and preparing her case, and in convincing the judge to grant her asylum. At her hearing, more than 25 people crammed into court, and the judge was clearly impressed by her witnesses and supporters, many of whom were women from the self-help sessions. Keen for other women to learn their rights and how to stay on top of their own cases, she wanted her victory recorded and made available to inspire other women.

T, aged 21, approached The Children's Society Destitution Project (CS) in January at serious risk of street homelessness. He had been staying on a sofa at his former NASS address, entering the property at night with the help of a friend, but other residents had threatened physical violence against him if he continued. He had been granted leave to remain in November 2017 and told to leave the accommodation in the next month, but due to his limited English and IT skills, he had not been able to find a property that he could afford with the Job Seekers' Allowance (JSA) and housing benefit he was now entitled to. The housing and homelessness team at his local council had allocated him a key worker but his one meeting with them had not been much help, a common problem when those recently granted status, especially single adults who are not in priority need of housing assistance.

The accommodation he was using was in East London, where he attended ESOL lessons four days a week at an FE college. Because there was a real risk of harm if he continued to stay there, the CS found him emergency homeless accommodation in central London that was specifically for homeless vulnerable young people and which had supervision and support.

The cost of travelling from central London to his East London college was around £55 a week, just slightly less than his entire weekly JSA. The CS used our Hardship Fund to support him to stay in education during this time by helping him with his transport costs. He is now in a YMCA hostel near his college.