

hope housing

emergency accommodation
for asylum-seekers





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Why Hope?

There are increasing numbers of asylum-seekers in and around Birmingham whose support and accommodation from the Home Office UK Border Agency have been cut off.

People in this position who have no other entitlements to “public funds” are usually completely destitute and often homeless. Many are also highly vulnerable because of their physical and/or mental condition. Some are pregnant, with children, disabled or elderly.

On top of this, because of the bar on “recourse to public funds”, homeless asylum-seekers generally have no access to mainstream provision for the homeless, e.g. hostels, women’s refuges or night shelters.

In 2007 Birmingham Law Centre (BLC) and its partners launched Hope Housing to provide emergency accommodation for homeless, destitute and vulnerable asylum-seekers in the West Midlands.

Hope So Far

Birmingham Law Centre and its partner-organisations have approached local Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) and other accommodation-providers for properties to be leased at a peppercorn rent by the project and used as emergency accommodation. Our first clients were accommodated in May 2007.

Hope Housing currently has capacity for fourteen women and men to be accommodated in four single-sex houses leased at peppercorn rents from three RSLs and the Catholic Diocese of Birmingham.

Originally the development of the project and furnishing, decoration and management of the properties were carried out by workers and volunteers from the Hope Housing partner-projects. However, with funding from the Lloyds TSB Foundation we now employ two part-time Hope Housing project workers.

Hope Now - the Need

We now want to expand Hope Housing's provision of emergency accommodation in the West Midlands. To do this we need to build on the relationships we already have with those who are willing to make accommodation available to the project, and to have more come on board to help us.





Getting Involved in Hope

We are looking for RSLs and other organisations and individuals to provide us with properties that we can use to accommodate asylum-seekers with no other way of getting housing.

Ideally we are looking for arrangements that run for at least one year, but hopefully more.

Clearly the main beneficiaries are homeless asylum-seekers but we believe there are also benefits in this to those who provide properties:

1. Supporting Hope helps fulfill the social mission of RSLs and other organisations.
2. If you make property available to Hope we will prepare it as accommodation for asylum-seekers, which will preserve and often improve its condition (perhaps particularly relevant for hard-to-let properties).
3. Hope will manage the letting, so that your resources are not needed for the duration of its assignation to Hope.
4. Supporting Hope can contribute to community cohesion.

How Hope Works

All properties that Hope Housing manages will be subject to a signed agreement with those providing the properties, which will include the agreed period that Hope can use the property.

Hope will issue licenses to asylum-seekers and manage the accommodation professionally and effectively.

Where necessary Hope will undertake to prepare the property for letting.

Hope will take referrals for suitable candidates for the accommodation from its partner-agencies, and manage the accommodation in partnership with those agencies (see 'Roles and Responsibilities' below).

The accommodation is intended for emergency use, so the emphasis will be on working with the referring agency towards a more permanent solution of the client's homelessness, e.g. through rehousing by the Home Office or by local authorities - Hope helps only those asylum-seekers that it considers should qualify for help elsewhere. This model has already been piloted by Birmingham Law Centre's successful Asylum-Seekers' Destitution Fund (now known as the Hope Destitution Fund).

Helping Hope

We are keen to talk to any organisation that can help Hope Housing provide more emergency accommodation to asylum-seekers. So please get in touch with Geoff Wilkins or Sarah Malka (contact details on back page) to arrange a meeting.

Hope in Coventry

The Hope partner-organisation Coventry Refugee Centre has recently established a project sub-group in Coventry which is working to develop the project in the city, and seeking the support of local accommodation-providers and funders there. For more information, contact Bhopinder Basi, Chief Executive of the CRC, at bhopinderb@covrefugee.org or on 02476-527114.

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Roles and Responsibilities

Birmingham Law Centre, the lead-organisation, has full legal responsibility for the project, the full title of which is 'Birmingham Law Centre Hope Housing'.

The partnership works together:

- To develop the project's aims, policies and working practices;
- To select residents to be accommodated in the project's accommodation;
- To rehabilitate, furnish and fit out the accommodation;
- To manage the day-to-day running of the accommodation;
- To provide support, in cash or kind, advice and casework assistance to residents of the accommodation;
- To assist in fund-raising for the project.

The partners meet at least monthly to plan and develop the work of Hope Housing. Meetings are also attended by representatives of the project's associates.

The Hope Partnership

The project is a partnership between:

- Birmingham Law Centre,
- ASIRT (Asylum Support and Immigration Resource Team)
- Coventry Refugee Centre,
- Karis Neighbour Scheme, Birmingham, and
- Restore (Birmingham Churches Together for Asylum-Seekers and Refugees);

Below is a brief description of each of the partner-organisations. A Memorandum of Co-operation is available on request which details the relationship between the partners. All the partners in the project are already working with destitute asylum-seekers in the West Midlands.

Birmingham Law Centre (BLC)

BLC is a solicitor-led legal advice/casework agency which aspires to the highest standards of casework expertise. BLC currently provides a wide range of social-work and legal-advice/casework services to individuals and communities in need in Birmingham and the West Midlands, including free in-depth debt, welfare-benefits and community-care advice and representation.

BLC is also developing and delivering anti-poverty strategies in partnership with local agencies and communities.

ASIRT (Asylum Support and Immigration Resource Team)

ASIRT aims to provide relief for asylum-seekers, refugees and their dependants in Birmingham who are in conditions of need, hardship and distress. It also provides general legal advice and assistance to persons subject to UK immigration control and their dependants, who by reason of their inadequate financial resources are otherwise unable to obtain such advice and assistance. In addition it aims to advance the education of local people and the education and training of asylum-seekers and refugees and their dependants in





order to assist with their inclusion into the wider community.

ASIRT aims to engage and co-ordinate the efforts of voluntary agencies on strategic and practical levels to alleviate the suffering of people made destitute by the asylum system and with no recourse to public funds.

Coventry Refugee Centre

Coventry Refugee Centre aims

- to relieve hardship and distress among refugee and asylum-seeker communities in and around the City of Coventry;
- to raise awareness of refugee, asylum and migrant issues in the wider community;
- to provide holistic client services.

To achieve these aims we rely on the diversity of our refugee and host communities. We have up to 100 volunteers, many of whom are from refugee communities, local colleges, universities and churches. We have 40 paid staff, including some who have direct experience of fleeing persecution. We speak 29 languages among our team. Clients originate from 100 countries. Staff and volunteers deliver services across a range of projects.

Current projects include:

- Housing advice
- Women's group
- Art therapy and counselling services
- Education project
- Befriending services
- Young people's group
- Providing urgent help to destitute clients, including the provision of basic necessities
- Advice and advocacy service

Restore (Birmingham Churches Together for Asylum-Seekers and Refugees)

Restore is a project of Birmingham Churches Together seeking to welcome and support refugees and asylum-seekers. Restore's mission is to encourage friendship and build resources, primarily through the church, and to enable refugees and asylum-seekers to make a valued contribution to society. Restore works to raise awareness, change attitudes and challenge prejudice in the host community. Its key areas of activity are befriending by local volunteers on a one-to-one basis; hosting social activities for families and adults; raising awareness within the host community, especially through the church network; working together with other refugee agencies, and advocating on behalf of refugees and asylum-seekers.

Karis Neighbour Scheme

Karis Neighbour Scheme seeks to offer practical support, friendship and advocacy in the local community through volunteers. It aims to promote community links and address needs unmet by other organisations. Karis's work includes helping people access services; speaking on their behalf to organisations and companies and assisting with bills, benefit queries and accommodation issues. It offers family support and home visits; a "Welcome to Ladywood" group for women and children; English classes with alternative activities for the students' children; parties and trips in the holidays; a community allotment; and visits to the isolated elderly. In addition volunteers provide tidying and clearing gardens; decorating; moving furniture; and DIY chores.

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Partners' Details

Birmingham Law Centre

1st Floor, Dolphin House
54 Coventry Road
Birmingham
B10 0RX
tel 0121-766-7466
fax 0121-766-8860
email admin
@birminghamlawcentre.org.uk
web site www.
birminghamlawcentre.org.uk
Birmingham Law Centre is a registered
charity, no. 1087514, and company
limited by guarantee, no. 4173542.

ASIRT

All Saints House
172 Herbert Road
Small Heath
Birmingham
B10 0PR
tel 0121-772-6700
fax 0121-772-3900
email admin@asirt.org.uk
web site
www.asirt.org.uk
ASIRT is a registered charity,
no.1098544.

Coventry Refugee Centre

15 Bishop Street
Coventry
CV1 1HU
tel 02476-227254
fax 02476-559674
email info@covrefugee.org

web site www.covrefugee.org/
Coventry Refugee Centre is a
registered charity, no. 1090123, and
company limited by guarantee, no.
4291931.

Karis Neighbour Scheme

Community Room
Balfour House
Cawdor Crescent
Ladywood
Birmingham
B16 8XH
tel 0121-689-6081
fax 0121-455-7524
email info@
karisneighbourscheme.org
web site
www.karisneighbourscheme.org
Karis Neighbour Scheme is a
registered charity, no. 1077200.

Restore

All Saints House
172 Herbert Road
Small Heath
Birmingham
B10 0PR
tel 0121-766-8764
email info@restore-uk.org
Web site www.restore-uk.org/
Restore is a registered charity, no.
243931.

Associates

The project's associates
include accommodation-
providers making available

properties for use as
emergency accommodation,
and local agencies working
with destitute asylum-seekers
which refer clients to the
project for accommodation.

Current associates include:

British Refugee Council, West
Midlands / British Red Cross,
West Midlands / Institute of
Applied Social Studies,
University of Birmingham /
Catholic Diocese of
Birmingham / Bournville Village
Trust / Friendship and Care
Housing / Mercian Housing
Association / The Children's
Society / Yardley Great Trust

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Hope Housing

Hope Housing is based at Birmingham Law Centre.

The Hope Housing Project workers are:
Geoff Wilkins Development Worker
email: geoff@birminghamlawcentre.org.uk

Sarah Malka Support Worker
email: sarah2@birminghamlawcentre.org.uk

Almamy Taal Volunteer
email: almamy@birminghamlawcentre.org.uk

Birmingham Law Centre

1st Floor, Dolphin House
54 Coventry Road
Birmingham
B10 0RX
tel 0121-766-7466
fax 0121-766-8860