



RESTORE

Birmingham Churches Together Supporting Refugees & Asylum Seekers

February 2010

Dear Friends

Greetings from Restore!

Restore relocates: We are moving on Wednesday, 24 February to:

**St George's Community Hub
Great Hampton Row, Newtown, B19 3JG
New phone number: 0121 236 0069**

Our new office provides us with desk space, a storeroom (more storage space than at present for food, gifts, toys etc) and our own meeting room where we can see people more confidentially. The site as a whole provides many extra resources, including larger meeting rooms (for training sessions and Open Meetings), a canteen and sports halls (offering the possibility of 5-a-side football in the future?!) So once we have reconnected to the internet, unpacked, settled in, etc, we hope there will be potential for new developments.

Restore Open Meetings We extend our thanks to Mohinder Kaur from RSVP (the Rape and Sexual Violence Project) who joined 27 of us at our January Open Meeting. It was a heavy topic, but we recognise that this is an issue which has affected some of our clients – both male and female. It is very encouraging to know there is a local service dedicated to helping the victims of such violence deal with the trauma they carry. In addition to a counselling service, there are group activities and help with practical needs. RSVP accepts new clients through self-referral.

You are very welcome to join us for our next ...

**Restore Open Meeting on Tuesday, 27 April
at St George's Community Hub, Great Hampton Row, Newtown, B19 3JG
from 7.30 – 9.30pm**

**The meeting will focus on 'What to do if you receive Indefinite Leave to Remain'
(through the Case Resolution process)**

**Dr Elizabeth Corrie, Legal Caseworker with The Rights Partnership, will help clarify
people's entitlements and answer questions.**

Training, volunteers and new matches In 2009 we received 142 new referrals of refugees and asylum seekers needing additional support. During 2009 we made 42 new befriending matches. So far in 2010 we have received another 23 new referrals. So there continue to be people needing our support and services. This, in turn, means that we need to recruit more volunteers. We are encouraged that 20 people attended our February training course and look forward to some of them becoming volunteer befrienders. We are also organising further courses: **'Who is fleeing persecution and seeking sanctuary?'** There will be an afternoon course on **Mondays, 19th and 26th April** from 1pm to 4pm at St George's Community Hub. An evening course will follow in July – dates to be finalised. We have received the following encouraging comments from a recent trainee:

"The volunteer training was invaluable to my personal development and becoming an effective befriender. I learnt a lot about current issues in seeking sanctuary and ways to welcome people to Birmingham. Time and thought were clearly taken in the delivery of training materials and Restore has been continually supportive in follow-up queries since I have started befriending."

'A time to share' on Saturday, 27th February This is taking place from 9.45am to 3.30pm at the Bethany Centre for Spirituality, 155a Kineton Green Road, Olton, B92 7EG. We hope it will be an opportunity to look at what volunteers enjoy about befriending; provide a safe place to let off steam about frustrations etc; explore what motivates us to befriend and how that has changed over time; think about the support needed and what more Restore could do to help; and think about what sustains befrienders.

The day will be facilitated by Revd John Austen and hosted by Sister Clare. Please contact Jeremy Thompson soon if you wish to participate in this day for befrienders.

Supermarket Voucher Exchange Scheme This scheme has been running since October 2009 with a gradual increase in the number of sponsors. We have been able, therefore, to increase the number of clients who can benefit from the scheme. Time and again we hear how much they appreciate the flexibility and choice that some cash gives them.

However, there is now a major change to the system. Asylum seekers on Section 4 support are being issued with an Azure payment card. This is still a shopping voucher and not cash, but rather than being restricted to using one supermarket, the Azure card can be used in a range of shops including Asda, Sainsburys, Tesco, Boots, Co-op and Peacocks. Shari has been told by the UK Border Agency that people who have an Azure card can buy whatever they want, "So, if a man wants to buy a gift-card for his wife, he can do so." The new card gives more choice of shopping outlets but as it can't be used at local cheaper shops or for bus tickets, asylum seekers on this support may still wish to have a voucher exchange option. Our hope is that they will be able to buy a gift card for £35 from one of the stores, which can then be exchanged for cash. This is new territory, so we wait to see how the scheme develops.

The Sanctuary Pledge This is a campaign being run by Citizens for Sanctuary asking prospective candidates from all political parties at the forthcoming General Election to sign a pledge to support the provision of sanctuary for those who have been persecuted. There was a training session on this issue in Birmingham in early February. Those interested are being encouraged to go as a delegation to see their MP and to contact other prospective parliamentary candidates. Further information and the full text of the pledge can be found at: <http://sanctuarypledge.org.uk>

Restore is organising a meeting on **Monday, 22 March from 7pm – 9pm at All Saints Church, Herbert Road, Small Heath, B10 0PR** (Restore's old address) to help equip and mobilise people for this campaigning activity. There will be training from Citizens for Sanctuary. Please join us.

Many Voices Following the success of our multilingual sponsored sing, read and speak events in 2008 and 2009, we are delighted to announce that

**Many Voices 2010
will be held on Saturday, 22 May at St Philip's Cathedral
from 11.30am to 1.30pm (ish!!)**

Please book the date in your diary for this celebration of unity and diversity. More details and sponsor forms will be available in due course. If you know of anyone who could contribute a language through song or reading or speaking, please contact Jeremy.

Annual Report 2009 and Annual Meeting 2010 We are currently working on Restore's 2009 Annual Report, which will be a crucial document as we seek funding for Restore beyond the end of 2010. We would like comments from befrienders, refugees and those seeking sanctuary about how Restore's work has affected them or about the impact of a specific Restore event, e.g. Many Voices 2009, the International Carol Service, 10th Anniversary Annual Meeting, an Open Meeting ... If you could write a sentence or paragraph, please send it to Jeremy ASAP. (Contributions will be anonymous and may be edited). Restore's Annual Meeting in 2010 is to be held in early June 2010 – further details will follow.

Administrative Assistant We are now seeking to employ a new Administrative Assistant for 12 hours per week. If you would like further details or know of someone who may be interested, please contact Shari. The deadline for applications is 12 March.

Good news It is great to include good news about those who are receiving either refuge status or Indefinite Leave to Remain. We are currently receiving news most weeks that someone has been given Indefinite Leave to Remain through the legacy Case Resolution process. Such good news then leads to significant changes. So there are many people in transition, moving to mainstream benefits, looking for accommodation and seeking employment. This has had a knock-on effect for us in the office as people require help or need referring to the Wardlow Road (refugee centre) in Nechells for advice on benefits and accommodation.

In the past the majority of asylum seeker clients have been in long-term limbo, however, with more and more of our clients being given ILR, we are starting to wonder how this will affect the services we offer. Will the needs be the same? Will there be new needs to which to respond? With status people get permission to work, but for some in the current economic climate it may be difficult to find employment. Please pray for Restore as we start to address these issues.

With best wishes

Shari, Jeremy and Sarah

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Jeremy Thompson, Befriending Co-ordinator befriend@restore-uk.org

Sarah Dixon, Befriending Support Worker sarah@restore-uk.org

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