

FRIENDS OF THE DROP-IN Newsletter



ISSUE NUMBER TWO | APRIL | 2013



F.O.D.I. officially began on 30/11/2011 when its constitution was signed. It was the vision of a group of people who had supported the drop-in for many years and wished to expand on the work already done there by opening new funding opportunities which would allow more activities to take place. These activities would be chosen by the membership (attendees of the drop in). We hope this newsletter will show a little of what has been achieved in a relatively short time.

F.O.D.I. Mission Statement:

To improve the mental health and well-being of the asylum-seeking and refugee community of Sunderland, lessening their social isolation and promoting their integration into the wider community, by supporting and extending the activities of the drop-in currently run on Wednesday afternoons.

Objectives:

1. To provide opportunities for the clients of the drop-in to participate in wider societal activities of a suitable nature.
2. To fund-raise for this aim.
3. To foster closer links into the wider community, providing opportunities for clients to link into this.
4. To work in partnership with other local organisations/groups to further this aim.

Refugee Week 2012

In June last year F.O.D.I. organised an event to celebrate Refugee Week. Funding was obtained from Gentoo, from donations and some money from fundraising events.

The event was opened by the deputy mayor and included various activities, awareness raising sessions and tables manned by our partner organisations. Refreshments were paid for out of funding obtained from Gentoo and were provided by The Winter Gardens and the British Kurdish Association.

There were 265 recorded (there were probably many more that went unrecorded) attendees from Sunderland and surrounding areas. Our thanks go to all the people who made it possible for the event to go ahead and who made the day the success it undoubtedly was.

Refugee Week 2013

This year we are being a little more ambitious and are planning events over the whole week to celebrate Refugee Week and to launch Sunderland City of Sanctuary. The schedule of events is given below.

17th June 2013 - Walk For Sanctuary
A Walk for Sanctuary, which would be from the Minster in Sunderland to the reporting centre in North Shields. There would be support for those undertaking this walk, and cut-price ferry crossings had been negotiated. People from organisations could arrange sponsorship either for their own organisations or for City of Sanctuary; refugees and sanctuary-seekers could simply enjoy the walk. Anyone wishing to take part or sponsor a walker should contact us at the Drop-In for sponsorship forms. Even if you just wish to take part please let us know so that we know the number of people taking part. There will be more about City of Sanctuary later in this newsletter.

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19th June 2013 - Stories Of Sanctuary

This will be the launch event for City of Sanctuary will be from around 7.00 p.m. until 9.00 p.m. on Wednesday, 19th June, in St. Mary's Church Hall. The idea is that four or five people will share their stories of what it has been like to seek sanctuary with a number of people coming to the event who, though probably generally wishing them well, have no real understanding of the difficulties of life as an asylum-seeker. These would be interspersed with stories from some of the people who have supported them: people like the Red Cross, Friends of the Drop-In, etc. The idea will be to get people to sign up to the idea of City of Sanctuary, and to pledge specific and concrete support for the movement. The Reverend Chris Howson will distribute a form which can be used for this purpose at the launch and before that with relevant people and organisations : those who can do something, and those who can influence others. He suggested that a sticker can be distributed with the forms on the actual evening, which those people and organisations who pledge support can take and display. There will be food prepared by various asylum seekers/refugees using recipes from their countries. We have some people in mind but volunteers to do this are sought. Money for ingredients will be provided. In addition to this it has been suggested that musical entertainment be provided. The type of entertainment will be 'firmed-up' during the time leading up to the event. Revd. Howson is leading on this event for the moment and if you wish to have further information his email address is chaplain@sunderland.ac.uk

21st. June 2013 - Showing of Film "I am Nasrine" at Sunderland University Theatre

The time for the showing has been set for 6 to 8 p.m. and we also hope to have a talk by the film-maker Tina Gharavi or a member of her team.

This debut fiction feature follows free-spirited 16-year-old Nasrine who is arrested by the Iranian police – for riding on the back of a boy's motorcycle – and sexually assaulted in prison. She flees to the UK with her older brother Ali and moves into a

Newcastle council estate that's a far cry from their comfortable middle-class existence in Tehran.

There is no entry fee and all are welcome to attend. This film will be of equal interest to those who have experience of asylum matters and those to whom it is a complete mystery.

22nd. June 2013 - Refugee Week Event

We will once again be holding an event to celebrate Refugee Week at the Sunderland Museum and Wintergardens in the Jack Crawford Suite. We will have stalls, music and many activities for all ages to enjoy. We will also have displays which we hope you will take note of which are designed to dispel some of the myths around the asylum process. Our volunteers will be there to assist, as always, to ensure you have an enjoyable and informative day. The activities will run from 12 until 4 p.m. We will have food and soft drinks to sustain you during the event. Last year we had over 250 recorded attendees and feedback was very positive. So come along and have a great day. We will shortly be producing a leaflet giving more details so be on the lookout for that.

City Library 17th to 22nd June 2013

During the week there will be a display on the notice boards in the library providing pictorial and written information around asylum. You can pick up information about the events during the week from there. Please take the time to look at the exhibits and take away information. We at F.O.D.I. find that learning about other cultures enriches our lives and those of our service users and it is our hope that such events as this will also enrich yours and generate a little understanding to counter the negatives we see in the media.

We have opened a small office.....

At 23A Bridge House – just across the road from St. Mary's Drop-in. We are using this for meetings, training, language classes and social sessions. Our thanks go to 'Bizspace' and especially Lynne Oliver for arranging this under their charity initiative.

At the social sessions, people can play cards, dominoes (like the guys in this photo), chess, etc; or watch DVD's or old films on VHS.

A schedule of what's on is available at the drop-in.



Sunderland has been a City for 21 years now. Some of us are setting out to turn Sunderland into a City of Sanctuary, which means, at root, it is trying to make Sunderland a welcoming place for asylum seekers and refugees. We have seen many individual acts of kindness towards asylum seekers, some of them incredibly generous, and are looking to formalise and extend the warmth some people already show.

Friends of the Drop-in has no paid staff. We would like to say a big thank you to all of the volunteers who help to make the drop-in run.

Here are just some of those who help:



Sporting Activities

Football

On Friday 19th April, 2013 at 'City Space' - University of Sunderland, where FODI worked out for an hour - with skills training and matches. This is another example of collaboration with the university to the benefit of all. Judging by the following photographs taken on the day everyone had a great time.



Sunderland Marathon

Organisers of this weekend's festival of running in Sunderland have reported a very successful series of events. Centred on today's Marathon of the North, Half Marathon of the North and Sunderland City 10k races, the weekend also included the BQ Team Relay and yesterday's Junior Miles of the North. The main three races today saw around 5,000 people running through the streets of the city, cheered on by thousands of spectators.

The 2013 Sunderland City 10k was won by Weynay Ghebresilasie of Sunderland Harriers in 32:51, followed by club-mate Nathan Reed in 34:20 and Paul Bentley of North York Moors in 34:24. Aly Dixon won the women's 10k in 36:58, followed by Elaine Lesley of Jarrow and Hebburn in 39:29 and Emma Rutley in 43:44.



Weynay is a relatively recent arrival in Sunderland having been dispersed here as an asylum seeker. We are happy to say that he has now been granted leave to remain in the UK.

(Sporting activities continued on next page)

A Night of Amateur Boxing.

On Thursday 18th April, 2013, Phil Jeffreys, Manager of The Olympian Boxing Club in Sunderland, invited 10 FODI members, as his guests, to an evening of amateur boxing, held at Farringdon Social Club.

It was a packed house and an enjoyable evening - first watching youngsters and teenagers who were still learning; and finally senior boxers from a variety of local clubs in the north-east who demonstrated their skills over 3 x three minutes rounds.

Phil Jeffreys, Boxing Promoter, greeted us on our arrival and made us welcome.



Phil Jeffreys with some of the invited guests at Farringdon Social Club.



Further photographs taken on the night.



During the last few months we have seen an influx of sporting professionals being dispersed to Sunderland. They are trying to share their expertise by coaching and competing where possible. Our funds are limited but we are assisting as best we can. If anyone is in a position to help with facilities or membership of clubs it would help a great deal.

BUDDY SYSTEM

Are you worried about attending immigration in North Shields?

If you are, please tell a volunteer at the Drop-In on Wednesdays. We are setting up a buddy system which means that someone from the Drop-In will contact you before you visit immigration and then ring you afterwards to make sure you are OK. They can also contact your solicitor and your family or friends if you have any problems at immigration.

F.O.D.I. will need your contact information and that of any solicitor who is actively dealing with your case so that we can help in the event of a problem. There is an application form for this scheme and you will get help from a volunteer if you want to participate. All volunteers are covered by our confidentiality policy and will not give out any information without your consent. If you have concerns you can discuss them with a volunteer at the drop-in.

Reporting is a legal requirement and North Shields will not accept many reasons for non-attendance. The only one that is routinely accepted is due to illness and even this must be proven by a letter or sick note from your doctor. If you do not attend for a while you will be placed on a watch list with the police. Non-attendance can also have an effect on any application for support. We are giving this information to assist you not to frighten you.

It is hoped to extend the buddy system to assist the most vulnerable people who are homeless and have no support by keeping track of them and offering what help we can. We are still working towards this but need people to sign up for this to make it happen.

REPORT RACISM

ARCH is working to stop racism in Sunderland.

Together
we can
beat it

YOU CAN REPORT:

- Without giving your name
- Something that has happened to you
- Something you have witnessed

WE CAN HELP BY:

- Referring you to an agency that can support you
- Taking action against the perpetrator
- Believing you and taking you seriously

TO REPORT A RACIST INCIDENT:

- Call free on 08000 778 378
- 24 hours a day
- Interpreters available

Or visit any of the organisations involved in the scheme.
A list of organisations can be found at www.sunderlandarch.org.uk



Snippets

Christmas : Seems almost a lifetime ago, doesn't it? We were lucky enough that Santa found just a little time out of his busy schedule to call in to distribute the presents (generously donated by the Salvation Army, The Durham Quakers meeting, and some individuals) to the children. The week previously, the adults had had a hot meal to celebrate Christmas, and our thanks to St. Mary's Church for the festive decorations!



Interviews

Do you have an interview or court in Bradford or Leeds and do you wish to be met when you arrive and be shown how to get to the court? If you do please tell a volunteer at the drop-in so that it can be arranged. Please give as much notice as you can.

IT Project

The IT project has been running for some time now and is proving more and more popular with attendees at the drop-in. It is also proving to be an asset to F.O.D.I. in our new office. We hope we will be able to keep this going for the next year with existing funds but we may have to look to funders to ensure this happens.

AGM

The Friends of the Drop-In for Asylum Seekers and Refugees are holding their Annual General Meeting on Wednesday 10th July at 3pm in St Mary's Parish Centre. If you are a member of F.O.D.I.:

- You can attend this meeting.
- You can stand for election to the committee if you complete a nomination form.
- You can vote for the committee.

To join FODI or to stand for the committee, ask at the Drop-In for an application form or for a nomination form, and hand them back in before Wednesday 26th June.

Trees for Sanctuary

Hylton College Human Rights Group sold sapling trees - cherry, ash, etc – at a recent fundraising event. They had the saplings in an exposed part of the college grounds, and explained to people that these trees needed a welcome and care: some had died trying to reach the safety of someone's garden. Others were looking pretty miserable. They needed to be taken to somewhere where they can flourish. The Group also distributed information about asylum-seeking, and purchasers got a tree and the information pack together.

All the trees were sold, and the students raised £20 for Friends of the Drop-In, for which we are really grateful – for the money, of course, but also for the work done to explain about asylum.

Special Thanks

None of the things contained in this newsletter would be possible without the many people who help us. We would like to thank our funders, the Sunderland Clinical Commissioning Group and The Northern Rock Foundation; and our generous supporters from St. Chad's, Streetcare, Durham Quakers' Meeting many individuals, St. Vincent de Paul Society, and our wonderful partners at Hylton College who provide soup, free haircuts, and sports opportunities for the people at the drop-in. Thanks also to the funders of the projects we ran this year. And, of course, the volunteers without whom we cannot even open the doors!

Thank you all very much.



northern rock
foundation



South of Tyne and Wear

