



NNLS DESTITUTE ASYLUM SEEKERS DROP IN
REPORT FOR 2022-2024

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

OUR CLIENTS

VOLUNTEERS

THE DROP IN:

RECEPTION

FOOD

CHILDREN

CLOTHING

NEW CLIENTS

LAWYERS AND DOCTORS

INTERPRETERS

FOLLOW UP

DROP IN TUTORING PROJECT

FINANCES

THANKS TO OUR SUPPORTERS

We are grateful to Chiara Fabbro and Sam Pearce/www.square-image.co.uk for taking the photographs and to all the volunteers who contributed to this report.

The NNLS Destitute Asylum Seekers Drop in registered charity no.1177599

For more information about the NNLS Destitute Asylum Seekers Drop in contact: info@nnlsdropin.org.uk

Website: www.nnlsdropin.org.uk

INTRODUCTION

The NNLS Destitute Asylum Seekers Drop in was set up in 2006 to help asylum seekers, many of whom face significant hardship and receive very limited support. It has grown to support around 700 clients. We hold a monthly Drop in where we give clients £40 supermarket vouchers (to last two months) and £10 travel expenses. We also offer home-cooked food, clothing such as hats and gloves, underwear and socks, some baby essentials and toiletries, sanitary products and free signposting with doctors and lawyers. We provide a warm welcome to our clients and as much support as we can. We try to help those without legal representation to find solicitors who can move their case forward and assist with their claim to secure leave to remain in the UK.

The Drop in was initially established as a social action project of the New North London Synagogue (NNLS). In 2018 it was registered as an independent charity. It is largely volunteer run. Our volunteers come from a wide variety of backgrounds and from all faiths and none. To accommodate the increase in the numbers of asylum seekers attending the Drop in, in 2016 we transferred some of our long-standing clients to a new partner Drop in established by the New London Synagogue (the NLS Drop in) at a nearby location.

Life for asylum seekers is extremely difficult. They are not allowed to work and often have to survive on as little less than £9 week. They are often disbelieved when they explain to officials the persecution from which they have fled. Only a few receive trauma therapy to help them process and recover from the experiences they have suffered in their home countries, on their journeys and sometimes after they arrive in the UK.

The Drop in has served as a model for several other Drop ins, some focusing on families and others on those who have recently been granted refugee status.

In April 2022, following the lifting of Covid-19 restrictions, we returned to full in-person sessions. Due to the numbers in need of support, we now concentrate on assisting clients in Barnet and Haringey or referred by some other charities. To enable us to maximise the number of asylum seekers we assist, we invite clients to attend every two months.

We are immensely grateful to our volunteers who give their time and commitment, to all who donate food and other goods for the asylum seekers, and to all those who contribute generous financial support, enabling us to provide the supermarket vouchers and travel expenses which are a lifeline for our clients. Each monthly Drop in costs around £18,000 to run. While we have been successful in raising funds, additional support is needed so we can continue to support our clients.

Looking ahead, from 6 January 2025 we are planning to merge with the NLS Drop in, who have continued to welcome around 200 asylum seekers, transferred from the NNLS Drop in. This will enable us to work more closely and make the most effective use of our resources.

OUR CLIENTS

Many asylum seekers have suffered severe persecution in their countries of origin and have made perilous journeys to escape.

Asylum applications to the UK are relatively low in international terms. In 2023, 67,337 applications for asylum were made in the UK. 70% of the world's refugees are living in countries neighbouring their country of origin, and within Europe in 2023, Germany received the highest number of asylum applications (351,510), followed by France (166,880) and Spain (162,420). While six in ten asylum claims are granted protection at the initial stage, refusals are often overturned on appeal and in the year to March 2024 48% of asylum appeals were allowed following an initial refusal.

Over the last two years we have welcomed new clients from 53 different countries at the Drop in, with the largest numbers of first-time clients coming from Iran, Iraq, Afghanistan and Sudan.

VOLUNTEERS

The Drop in depends on volunteers. Each month around 80 volunteers help out with a large range of jobs that include: welcoming our visitors and monitoring queues, entertaining children, handing out toiletries, sanitary products, underwear and socks, or on our well-stocked food and dessert counters. Volunteers donate, cook and prepare food.

We also have data entry volunteers, interviewers and interpreters to greet new clients, assess their eligibility and show them round. We are fortunate to have the support of volunteer immigration lawyers and doctors who bring their important specialist skills.

Whatever their role, volunteers offer a friendly welcome, kindness and sympathy to the many asylum seekers who attend. Many people prepare food home, deliver it and help to serve, others drive to collect donations. We now also have a paid member of staff to assist in the administration and coordination of the Drop in.

Our trustees develop and review policies, plan training sessions and liaise with our donors, and with the host venue, as well as the many organisations who support us with donations of funding, food, toiletries and clothing.

THE DROP IN

We describe below some of the areas of our monthly Drop in.

Reception

A warm and friendly welcome awaits clients. Clients who have registered previously visit the Drop in on alternate months; new clients come to the 'first-timers' area. We have a pool of around fifteen experienced reception volunteers, enabling us to operate each month with a minimum of eight. Volunteers rotate between the areas on a monthly basis to get to know clients better and learn how the different areas function. Once the Drop in opens, we ensure swift processing. Clients show their identification and are registered. They are given £10 for travel expenses and £40 in supermarket vouchers (£20 for each month). They may ask to see one of our volunteer lawyers or doctors.

After clients have passed through reception, they are offered a cooked meal, underwear and socks, toiletries and sanitary products, they may see our lawyers and doctors, and sit and chat with friends and volunteers with a home-cooked meal or a cup of tea and some cake.

Clients given Indefinite Leave to Remain receive a final £50 vouchers and are signposted to further support outside the Drop in.

Food

We have superb team of volunteers who generously cook and bake for the Drop in each month. We have set up a WhatsApp group for the food donations. We also provide take-away boxes, which are much appreciated by those in asylum-seeker hotels where the food may be of poor quality.

The day of each Drop in is marked by a stream of containers of food that has been, deliciously and generously, prepared and delivered. Some volunteers invest many hours in home preparation and arrive with large quantities of complex dishes; other volunteers may bring a few boiled eggs. We are grateful for all the contributions – combined they are greater than the sum of their parts.

In addition to the main meal, each month we provide our guests with cakes, biscuits and fruit. No two months are the same, but, thanks to the generosity of our supporters, we always provide a selection of home-made as well as bought cakes and biscuits.

The desserts are a real treat for our guests who rarely have the opportunity to enjoy the luxury of cakes and fruit.

We engage in conversation, welcome both newcomers and old timers, giggle with the children, ask after the welfare of their parents, and engage with individuals with dignity and respect.

The smiles on their faces and the thanks we receive make each Drop in worthwhile for our team of volunteers who come every month.

Children

The Children's Area is coordinated and run by a consistent team of committed volunteers. Each month we welcome around 50 children, who come to the Drop in with their parents or carers. The Children's Area consists of an arts and crafts corner, where children can do clay sculpture, painting, collage and drawing. There are puzzles and games for the children to use to play with one another. We have stories to read, cars and train tracks, small world play, and a soft play area for babies. We also facilitate an outdoor play area for more energetic children, where they can play football and other games, under the supervision of volunteers.

Welcoming such a range of children, in terms of age, experience and background, can be challenging, and we continue to develop our work with them. The Children's Area is a joyous (and noisy) corner of the Drop in. We have a wish-list of art materials and toys, which we offer to people who wish to donate to the Drop in, available upon request.

Clothing

We offer underwear and socks to all adults and children at every Drop in. We are very grateful to Smalls for All for sending us donations of underwear. During the winter months we offer hats, gloves scarves and, where possible, coats. We receive donations from primary schools, Wrap up London, and also from our volunteers who bring in a fantastic selection of coats, etc.

We also offer some good quality second-hand clothing for babies and young children, and when available, we offer 'baby welcome' packs to pregnant mothers. Thanks to generous donations from a manufacturer, we are also sometimes able to offer new trainers to first-time clients, which are greatly appreciated.

As well as our regular volunteers with their very many skills, energy and sensitivity to clients, we are hugely grateful for the partnerships with a number of organisations and individuals for their voluntary support, both in donations and hands-on help with distribution.

New Clients

To manage the significant need we see at the Drop in we now focus on supporting asylum seekers living in Barnet and Haringey. Clients now do not have to make long journeys across London to attend. The number of first-time clients we receive varies from month to month – while we often welcome about thirty new clients, on some months there may be forty or fifty newcomers.

Our volunteers work to make each new client feel welcome, to ensure they have the best possible experience at the Drop in and take advantage of what we can offer. They sit with new clients as they wait for their interview, explaining how our Drop in works. Sometimes people are really sad and need a sympathetic ear.

We have a regular team of interviewers who conduct a short interview with new clients. These start an hour before the main Drop in opens, so that new clients have time to access all the services. The interview is friendly, welcoming and supportive, and we let the clients know that what they say is confidential, and we are all volunteers who are here to help asylum seekers.

The aim of the interview is to check that the new clients have claimed asylum and are therefore eligible for the Drop in; to gain an understanding of their asylum claim and where they are in the asylum process; and to learn about their needs so that we can do our best to help them. We arrange for them to see our volunteer lawyers and doctors, and signpost them to other resources that may be helpful. If relevant, we help them complete an HC1 application entitling them to free prescriptions, dental treatment and eye checks.

Following the interview, eligible clients are registered on our database and receive £40 in supermarket vouchers (£20 a month) and £10 travel expenses; those who are not eligible are still given travel expenses and a hot meal.

Once clients have spoken to an interviewer, they are given a welcome pack of toiletries, and our induction volunteers show them round the Drop in and take them to appointments with our lawyers and doctors, and to the dining hall for a warm meal. The aim is to make sure that the clients will feel confident to return for the following session, understand the various services we can offer and have enjoyed their first visit.

It is rewarding to see our new guests relax and smile, and we feel quite humbled by the expressions of gratitude we often receive at the end of the day.

'Thank you so much for helping me today. You don't know how happy I was, because I was really tired physically and mentally. Thank you from the bottom of my heart.' Thanks from a new client to a volunteer at the Drop in

Lawyers and Doctors

The team of volunteer asylum lawyers on the rota are the jewel in the crown of the Drop in. They attempt to place cases, where the client does not have a solicitor, with a reputable firm with a legal aid contract. Due to the shortage of legal aid lawyers (legal aid fees have been frozen since 1996), around 50% of asylum seekers currently have no legal representative. Our lawyers are able to give advice to our clients on the often daunting asylum process, as well as on accessing appropriate financial and other support.

In addition, at each monthly session, volunteer doctors assist clients who wish to seek medical advice and signposting.

We have a team of regular volunteers who work hard to create a calm, welcoming and effective reception area for everyone who wants to see the lawyers and doctor, and we are very grateful to these professionals for offering their time and skills.

Interpreters

Our volunteer interpreters provide invaluable assistance with the new clients' interviews and for the meetings with the lawyers and doctors. Our interpreters include speakers of Arabic, Farsi, French, Spanish, and other languages.

We are looking to recruit more Amharic, Tigrinya, Kurdish Sorani and Albanian interpreters and to build up our interpreter database.

We are grateful for the assistance from our team of interpreters – some of them former clients - who always bring a smile and understanding to all areas of the Drop in.

Follow up

We ask all clients to sign an authority giving their solicitor permission to contact us and confirm their immigration status. This helps to ensure that we are targeting the most vulnerable with our support.

Following the Drop in, we try to find reputable legal aid lawyers for clients who are unrepresented, and we may also assist with housing and health problems, as well as signposting and referring to other services.

In addition, we work collaboratively with other NGOs in the asylum sector, especially when we have clients in common, and attend forums to discuss common problems and share good practice. We have researched and developed a series of information sheets to assist clients to access resources outside of the Drop in. These sheets range from other resources that provide help and advice to asylum-seekers, to organisations offering English lessons and sources of support for new mothers and LGBTQ+ asylum seekers. Our aim is always to try to offer the most practical form of assistance possible.

DROP IN TUTORING PROJECT

The Drop in starting an online tutoring scheme for clients' children during the pandemic and, due to the positive response, we have continued to run this programme since then.

We currently have eight tutors matched with pupils and a further five pupils on the waiting list. Our tutors teach a mixture of Maths and English to primary school pupils for an hour a week over Zoom or Microsoft Teams.

Since the scheme began, our tutors have taught 30 pupils. Some tutors have moved on to teach new students when their pupils leave primary school. The feedback from parents and tutors has been positive and the tutors have reported seeing their pupils make great progress.

Our tutors commit to a minimum of six months, and we provide training on safeguarding and lesson planning, as well as technical support for those less familiar with using Zoom or Teams.

FINANCES

Statement of Financial Activities incorporating Income and Expenditure Account for the year to 31 March 2024 and 2023

	Total Unrestricted Funds 2024	Total Unrestricted funds 2023
Income from:		
Donations	148,688	136,927
Gift Aid	7,785	7,591
Deposit interest	2,829	616
Total income	<u>£159,302</u>	<u>£145,134</u>
Expenditure on:		
Charitable activities	213,967	160,221
Total expenditure	<u>£213,967</u>	<u>£160,221</u>
Net (deficit)	(54,665)	(15,087)
Reserves brought forward	320,604	335,691
	<u>£265,939</u>	<u>£320,604</u>
Funds held at bank	247,037	284,492
Debtors and creditor	18,902	36,112
Total Charities' Funds carried forward	<u>£265,939</u>	<u>£320,604</u>

Note:

A full copy of the independently examined accounts for the year ended 31 March 2024 is available from the Charity Commission:

<https://register-of-charities.charitycommission.gov.uk/en/charity-search/-/charity-details/5116965/accounts-and-annual-returns>

THANK YOU

We would like to express our deep gratitude to:

All those who have provided financial support for the Drop in over the last two years, including:

Anonymous donors
Donation in memory of Mrs Berenice Burman
London Churches Refugees Fund
M&C Trust
Milton Damerel Trust
New North London Synagogue
Pears Foundation
Sigrid Rausing Trust
Wilsons Solicitors

All those who have set up standing orders to provide regular support the Drop in, made donations to mark special occasions and held fundraising events for the Drop in.

In addition, we are grateful to the following who have helped by providing 'in kind' donations:

Bloody Good Period
Beauty Bank
The pupils and staff of Eden Primary School
Goods for Good
Good News shoes
WrapUp London (run by HandsOn London)
The Hygiene Bank
The pupils and staff of Martin Primary School
New North London Synagogue
Sebby's Corner
Smalls for All
Vodafone
Donations of food and clothing from volunteers

DONATIONS FORM - NNLS DESTITUTE ASYLUM SEEKERS DROP IN
Registered Charity No. 1177599



We particularly welcome monthly standing orders or direct debit payments to help us meet the costs of the Drop in.

PLEASE COMPLETE & FORWARD THIS FORM TO YOUR BANK:

PLEASE ALSO SEND A COPY TO NNLS DROP IN
c/o ACCOUNTS, NNLS, 80 EAST END ROAD, LONDON N3 2SY
or email: info@nnlsdropin.org.uk

To: _____	Name of Bank
_____	Address
_____	Post Code _____

Please pay Barclays Bank, Leicester, LE87 2BB
Sort Code: 20-76-90 Account Number: 13930637 Reference: Drop In for the credit of the NNLS Destitute Asylum Seekers Drop In, the sum of £ _____
Commencing on 10 th _____ and monthly thereafter until further notice.

Donor - Please debit Account number: _____
Sort code: _____
Account Name _____
Address _____
_____ Post Code _____
Signed _____
Date _____

OTHER OPTIONS:
<input type="checkbox"/> I would like to make a one-off donation of £ _____
<input type="checkbox"/> I would like to donate £ _____ using charity vouchers
<input type="checkbox"/> GIFT AID I would like my donation to be treated as a Gift Aid donation. Please sign below. I confirm I have paid or will pay an amount of Income Tax and/or Capital Gains Tax for each tax year (6 April to 5 April) that is at least equal to the amount of tax that all the charities or Community Amateur Sports Clubs (CASCs) that I donate to will reclaim on my gifts for that tax year. I understand that other taxes such as VAT and Council Tax do not qualify. I understand the charity will reclaim 25p of tax on every £1 that I will give.
Signed _____
Email address _____
Date _____

THE NNLS DESTITUTE ASYLUM SEEKERS DROP IN

Registered charity No. 1177599

Trustees:

Chair: Ian Karet OBE

Treasurer: Jonathan Lachmann

Jocelyn Blumberg, Rickie Burman, James Elliott, Roma Felstein, Madeleine Foster,
Catherine Thome

Trustees who retired 2022-24:

Stephen Coleman, Rachel Karp, Mildred Levison, David Raff, Anita Vasisht

For more information about the NNLS Destitute Asylum Seekers Drop in contact:
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