

JULY 2020 UPDATES

SUPPORT DURING CRISIS

INTRODUCTION

Over the last month our two new team members have become more established in their roles and we as a team we are planning for the future to ensure we can offer a safe and high quality service to all our beneficiaries.

DESTITUTE PROJECT

The last month has been very rewarding for us all at MRSN on the Destitute project. The many donations we have received from residents in the local community has been amazing and we are grateful for all of them. One of our recipients received a bicycle, helmet and a brand new lock from a couple. The recipient was elated had the widest smile and the couple shared their joy in giving. We were also given 10 pairs of brand new Kickers to support our project from Lucy Bonner at "The Lonely Arts Club" which will be for our asylum seekers/refugees who may have need of them. We also give a shout out to Asda for their continued support with donations of hygiene products and not forgetting Lorna Stockwood and her family for the groceries they bought and delivered to our office on Princess road.

We also lift our hats to our wonderful volunteers on the "Check in and chat service". They have made this work possible by giving their time and effort unselfishly and working at the highest level to get value for those who come to us in need. Our drivers, bag packers and admin support volunteers on the destitute project are second to none. The zulu word "Sawubona" simply means "I see you I acknowledge you". It is a greeting of acknowledgement and I believe these projects don't only see, we also take action to show that we care .

CONTENT: UPDATES IN BRIEF

- **DESTITUTE PROJECT**
- **REOPENING OF THE DROP IN CENTRE**
- **ASYLUM GUIDE COORDINATOR**
- **REFUGEE INTEGRATION SERVICE**
- **SHARED ROUTES PROJECT**
- **RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT**



REOPENING OF THE DROP IN CENTRE

As lock-down has eased and organisations are beginning to reopen, we have been planning how we can also reopen a face to face service without putting any of our beneficiaries at risk. In the last week we have undertaken a thorough risk assessment at the St James church building to plan how we can operate a safe drop in centre within the next month. The church building allows us access to their large hall which makes maintaining social distancing possible and allows us to operate a one way flow of traffic.

While we will not be using our office for drop in centre meetings, we have also been using this time to make some much needed renovations to our office, including improving the lighting throughout and installing new shutters on the back door to improve security.



ASYLUM GUIDE COORDINATOR

Over the past month I have become more established in my new role as the Asylum Guide coordinator. Currently I am building partnerships with other voluntary sector organisations and asylum housing providers so I can create referral pathways for asylum seeking clients into the project.

I am also working on recruiting new volunteers, developing training, creating a volunteer handbook so volunteers feel really welcomed into the project. We are also working with a graphic designer to build better represent statistics for the volunteer handbook.

I'm excited about the possibility of delivering training in person as the lock-down is gradually eased and we prepare to move back to face to face services.

REFUGEE INTEGRATION SERVICE

As we ease out of lock-down MRSN is gearing up to be able to respond to enquiries for accommodation. At present RIS has a portfolio of landlords with rooms to-let in shared properties. Although this is being promoted across partner agencies, the take up for rooms has been poor. The feedback I from colleagues is that their new refugees are not wanting privately rented accommodations and/or house shares.

As case/key (or other) worker we have a responsibility to help new refugees manage (what can be deemed as their unrealistic) expectations about their entitlements and access to certain types of accommodation in the housing sector. At the time of writing

RIS has 20+ rooms available for single adults across a range of shared facilities in Manchester. In recent weeks 3 people have taken up offer of new tenancies. If you know of any single adult homeless (or at risk of becoming homeless) refugees please contact andrea@mrsn.org.uk for further details.



SHARED ROUTES PROJECT

This month we continued to advertise services and training offers to peer navigators as support into volunteering is still impacted by organisations not yet being fully reopened and there is a limited offer of volunteer roles. So, we're happy to fill this gap by keeping our peer navigators updated on various opportunities.

A couple of them engaged in online English courses and the advertisement of a free coding programme was also well received.

"Thank you very much, the Shared Routes team. This is really helpful."

(Belal*, peer navigator)

We have now finalized our online training programme to become a volunteer peer navigator. We took great care to develop online modules that follow our learning approach of being trainee-centred, interactive and inclusive and we are very excited to start the six-week programme next week. It was the first time that we had to promote the project online and recourse to online recruitment. This new experience went surprisingly well. A very good number of people registered for the training and are excited about the training as well.

"I received an email from my tutor Nick* in Salford college for applying in the free training course to become a volunteer and I am so excited to apply. I am still an asylum seeker and I am interested in working as a volunteer community worker."

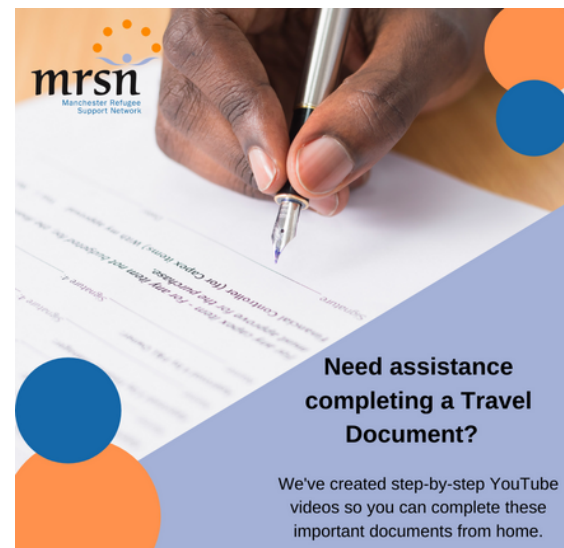
(Lama*, applicant for the peer navigator training)

Names changed according to our confidentiality policy.

RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT

In my role as the Resource Development Worker, I ensure that all our equipment and online resources work well so that each project is able to deliver their services. I also manage the communications of MRSN. It has been a privilege to have been working with our volunteers to develop new designs for social media and printed leaflets to raise awareness of different parts of our services. It is essential that we continue to develop our communications in order that we can share stories of our beneficiaries to raise awareness of their experiences, keep funders and supporters informed, inform our service users of updates, and develop more opportunities for online fundraising options.

In addition to this, I have been working with our projects to develop the website to work better for us, as well as developing a completely new looking website behind the scenes, which I hope to be launched within the next 3 months. I am also now reviewing our policies and database management software to ensure that our database systems can evolve with us as our organisation goes through changes.



One of the social media posts created by one of our volunteers.

