

I am writing to you to advise you of some changes that are being made to the services and support to asylum seekers and vulnerable migrants in the Halton area by Trinity Safe Spaces and A Better Tomorrow, Halton.

A Better Tomorrow, Halton CiC, led by its Managing Director, Ashraf Hamido, has as its main aim to support families new to the UK, some of whom feel disenfranchised and isolated on arrival. In addition, ABT, H supports a number of residents who have been here for longer but who require ongoing support to integrate fully into the local community eg those with on-going physical and/or mental/emotional health issues. Before the pandemic, ABT, H normally provided football, social gatherings, interpretation, Arabic school, help/support to vulnerable people, greeting new arrivals into the Resettlement Programme and the two Trinity Safe Space drop-ins for asylum seekers, run by volunteers from the faith sector. Its 2 staff and volunteers continually encourage community cohesion.

Due to the lockdown re. Covid 19, the Trinity Safe Space buildings had to be closed in March causing the leaders' teams to join together as one, to make plans together with A Better Tomorrow, Halton, to support the asylum seekers in Halton we had made contact with, as well as any new arrivals we came across. The support has changed to support from A Better Tomorrow, Halton with many activities, carried out by the small team from A Better Tomorrow, Halton during lockdown: -

- * to support the emotional/physical health of the asylum seekers through regular phone calls and WhatsApp messages, which also reduce social isolation
- * to keep them involved by linking together with others eg in a WhatsApp group or in the pre-ESOL programme
- * to provide them with essential supplies of food, toiletries, clothes, cleaning products, bedding, and household items
- * to welcome new arrivals ensuring they are plugged into local support and their needs are met as far as possible
- * to ensure families access free school meals vouchers for their children through phone calls and detailed explanations
- * to give detailed explanations to people about Covid 19 and the rules /regulations surrounding this in order to keep people safe, including updates and interpretation
- * to contact other partners to help to solve problems or provide expert advice and guidance
- * to signpost to other services
- * to engage and support volunteers to help with the tasks

Many of these activities have been done in partnership with others eg the foodbanks, the TSSs' leaders' team and the schools.

From Our Halton grants, the TSSs have paid for A Better Tomorrow, Halton's time to carry out these activities for 3 hours a week each ie 6 hours total

A Better Tomorrow, Halton is represented by Ashraf Hamido, on several strategic partnerships within the borough and he is often asked to contribute by carrying out tasks or helping others, which all take time to complete, adding to the weekly average of hours spent working/volunteering.

As a result of the growing need, which includes the partnership working activities, and the liaison with the Daresbury Park Hotel and its residents, the tasks described above were taking A Better Tomorrow, Halton, on average, 30+ hours a week. This is unsustainable. The TSS Team Leaders have a duty of care to Ashraf and have advised him to cut back considerably on his voluntary activities.

Some helpful suggestions for you in response to many requests already received:

Translation – all organisations have a statutory responsibility under the Equality Act to enable access to their services. For translation try using Language Line or similar services; if you are in a school there is a new support service you can buy into from MEAS (you have received information about this already); you can use Google translate or similar apps but be careful – the voice version is more accurate than the typed version and also some people are not literate in their own language. From a safeguarding point of view you should only use family members or close friends as a very last resort to help with translation.

Family support – you can refer as normal into icart. Also, the Venus Charity in Halton is delivering family support to asylum seekers.

Food – you can refer people to one of the foodbanks as an emergency solution.

Health – all asylum seekers should be registered with a GP practice – if they are not you can help them do this using the translation suggestions above.

Welfare benefits – if leave to remain has been granted, you can help them to apply for Universal Credit, using the translation suggestions

Therefore, we would kindly ask that, for the foreseeable future, you try the above solutions first then **only if you are still struggling**, any requests for information, support, help with issues with families, children, interpretation or anything else to do with asylum seekers and vulnerable migrants in Halton, which would normally go to Ashraf, come through to the email address below where they will be triaged to help us decide on an appropriate response. Could you please inform all of your staff team of this.

TSSHalton@gmail.com

Thank you

Pauline Ruth, on behalf of the Trinity Safe Spaces' Team Leaders