



A view from  
the edge  
Doncaster  
Conversation  
Club  
Newsletter  
06 June 2019

STANDING ALONGSIDE REFUGEES AND ASYLUM SEEKERS IN DONCASTER

IN THIS ISSUE

## Indicators of integration

By Paul FitzPatrick

Just this week, the Home Office published a new set of ‘indicators of integration’ of refugees, drawing upon recent research, both from academics and from their own Migration and Border Analysis. It is a substantial piece of work, and a first glance suggests that it may actually be useful in shaping the thinking and practice of organisations involved with refugees and asylum seekers. Not only are the indicators more comprehensive and contemporary but they are accompanied by an interactive toolkit to help users identify and utilise existing instruments for measuring different aspects of integration, a *What Works* document outlining good practice in refugee integration and a *Theory of Change* showing how to move from theory to practice.

The report regards communities as ‘integrated’ where ‘people, whatever their background, live, work, learn

and socialise together, based on shared rights, responsibilities and opportunities’. Integration requires changes from both incoming and host communities, and access to resources and opportunities.

Given the importance of language skills for integration (to access to services and education) the report recommends that access to classes and integration activities should begin as soon as possible after arrival. If this is taken seriously, it marks a departure from current access policies, and needs joined-up thinking across government departments.

Crucially the language of the indicators has changed to reflect much more the two way nature of integration and the responsibilities of host communities to welcome newcomers. As ever, the proof of the pudding will lie in the eating.



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## A view from the front door

By Alison Podmore

A view from the front door at DCC!



I can confirm, if you didn't already know, that Doncaster Conversation Club is a very busy place!

I can say this with authority as I regularly have the opportunity to welcome those who come through our doors on a Thursday afternoon as I sit on the front desk. Most weeks the sign in sheet spans three to four pages, which equates to approximately 110 – 130 individuals. When children and volunteers are added onto this, the actual numbers probably exceed 150.

Lucy is my right hand woman on the job and between us we try to make that first point of contact a friendly one. I have always regarded remembering peoples' names as an important way of making someone feel valued but since taking on this role at DCC, this principle has taken on a new level of challenge! All I can say in this matter now is that I do try hard but fail very often!

Keeping an eye out for the newcomer is especially important. A special welcome and procedures are set in motion upon their arrival. They

are firstly given an orange name label which identifies them as a newcomer so everyone can do their bit to make them feel welcome. We also give two coloured tickets which gives them access to essential initial services. The green ticket enables them to see our fantastic health team. Here they will be registered with DCC but also with NHS services in Doncaster. Additional health services are offered on site through our resident health bus and health professionals. The second ticket, an orange one, enables them to see Migrant Help to assess if they need any additional support at that moment in time. Where possible we try to find someone who can "take them under their wing" to explain in their own language the help and hospitality that is on offer at the Conversation Club.

One of the most challenging aspects of this role is communication. Trying to work out what help someone is needing when there is no common language can be difficult. We usually get to some form of understanding through gestures or shouting out for an interpreter of a particular language! The main services that are on offer are Travel Documents, Housing, College Enquiries, Migrant Help, Health, Red Cross, Benefits and general "Office" which is heroically run by Jan and Nic. These eight areas are represented by eight colours of ticket on offer at the front desk. It is one of our roles to try to match people and services correctly. Again, all I can say is that we try our best but I am constantly aware of the complexities of the system and how little I actually know.

For me, I really enjoy being at the front door. In many ways it is a window to the world. I get to meet such a range of incredible people from such diverse cultures and backgrounds. Nearly every week I return to my husband to share something new that I have discovered about a country, a tradition, culture or simply an individual. I also love being part of a team which does some incredible work.



**COOKING THROUGH TIME  
ESOL CLASSES**



10AM-12NOON | FRIDAYS IN JUNE  
CENTRAL FAMILY HUB, WELCOME WAY  
DONCASTER, DN1 3LE

**FREE ESOL AND HISTORY WORKSHOPS**

Meet new people and improve your English skills. Find out about Doncaster's history and have a go at cooking recipes from the past. All welcome. Come along on 7, 14, 21, 28 June.

**CELEBRATE REFUGEE WEEK**  
Friday 21st June from 10am at Central Family Hub  
Join us as we celebrate Refugee Week with food, music and stories.



HISTORY | HEALTH | HAPPINESS



## The reorganisation of asylum services in Yorkshire and the Humber

Migration Yorkshire organised an event at the beginning of May to update representatives of the voluntary and community sectors in Yorkshire and the Humber on developments regarding the management of asylum seekers in the area. Contributions were made by the Home Office and by the Mears group, which is taking over the management of asylum housing from G4S. This change will begin in Doncaster from June.

The Home Office noted that 'Intake' of people seeking asylum had been higher than normal over the winter months, resulting in an 11%+ increase in the supported asylum seeking population nationally. This translates into an additional 1000+ people receiving support nationally. They acknowledged that this has provided challenges to the system.

In this period, the main countries of origin have been Iran, Iraq and Afghanistan.

With regard to the 'dispersal' of asylum seekers, Local Authorities have been actively highlighting a perceived lack of equity within the process. This has led to discussions via Local Authorities and the Local Government Association to discuss an agreed definition of equity and potential costs.

### AASC

The new management system is known as AASC: Asylum Accommodation and Support Contracts. It is aimed at delivering a 'value for money, and affordable, accommodation and support system which effectively delivers the UK's statutory and international obligations to asylum seekers, supporting the operation of effective immigration controls.'

The vision behind this system is worth quoting in full:

'The system will ensure the safety and security of service users and their host communities. Services will be delivered as consistently and efficiently as possible, at a level which is proportionate in comparison with the services offered to UK nationals:

- **Service users** will experience an accessible and easy to navigate system, which delivers consistent and compassionate support. The system will protect the vulnerable, keep service users safe, orientate them to live in their communities and prepare them to act on the outcome of their asylum claim.
- **Providers** will supply a service of which they are proud, securing a broad supply of accommodation and appropriate support services. The department will take practical steps to give them greater certainty on demand, with a sustainable balance of risk, an appropriate rate of return

and scope for innovation in delivery.

- **Communities** will feel involved in the support of destitute asylum seekers, working in partnership with UKVI and others to support community cohesion as service users transition through the asylum system.'

### Introduction to AIRE

Advice, Issue Reporting and Eligibility (AIRE) is the new term used to describe the Consolidated Advice and Guidance Service (CAGS) and Contracted Consolidated Asylum Support Service. This new service will be delivered through a single national contract and aims to be an 'end-to-end service for every Service User query.'

The AIRE service delivery has five core components:

- Eligibility Assistance
- Advice & Guidance
- Issue Reporting
- Move On
- Face-to-Face Support.

Migrant Help has been awarded the contract for AIRE.

### The Mears group in Yorkshire

Mears are a FTSE 500 company with an annual revenue of approximately £1 bn. They have over 10,000 employees. They claim to be a unique company in the services sector and their aspiration is to be regarded as the UK's most trusted provider of housing and care. They regard housing and caring for people as their core business and claim to understand the needs and challenges of the asylum sector.

Mears already maintain around 15% of the UK's social housing units and have major strategic partnerships with over 70 local authorities and housing associations. They provide domiciliary care to over 20,000 people per annum and manage 12,000 homes on behalf of local authorities and central government, including providing substitute service accommodation for the Ministry Of Defence.

In gaining the AASC contract, the Mears group say they will put relationships, partnerships and collaboration at the centre of their approach, with Local Authorities, Strategic Migration Partnership, Police and Health agencies, the AIRE Provider and the voluntary, community, charitable and community sector. They will reflect the Service Users' voice across their delivery model.



With regard to dispersal accommodation, they will use a self delivery model in which Mears staff provide all move-ins, inductions, property inspections, welfare checks and signposting. They provide a dedicated team of Housing Managers who will undertake fortnightly property inspections and a dedicated team of Resident Welfare Managers who will provide additional support and signposting to vulnerable Service Users and liaison with Voluntary &

Community Groups. Mears operate with a 'partnership team', a 'property team' and directly employed staff who carry out property repairs and maintenance.

## Don't forget the driver

Comedy BBC2

Review by Paul FitzPatrick



Is this the first programme on British TV in which a character speaks Tigrinya? The character in question is Rita, a young Eritrean woman who manages to reach Bognor on a coach returning from a day trip to northern France. The coach passengers had followed up a visit to a war cemetery with one to a duty-free wine superstore, where the elderly travellers could replenish their stocks.

Toby Jones, writer and actor, plays the part of Pete, the poorly paid and much put-upon coach driver and single father, who, reluctantly and inarticulately, takes into his home the unknown. Threatened by traffickers, she had stowed away in his coach.

The series is a masterly exercise in the art of 'Show, don't tell'. Words like 'asylum seeker', 'migrant', 'refugee' or 'Brexit' are never uttered in the course of the six programmes. The series is framed by the mysterious appearance of a dead

body (most likely that of someone attempting to reach the UK by boat) on the beach at Bognor and its later burial.

The series paints a convincing picture of the confusions of contemporary British life. The challenges which face us collectively are alluded to in the joblessness of Pete's daughter, the dementia of his mother, the kindness of her Pakistani neighbour, the prevalence of the flags of St George and the presence of Polish workers. Apparently, the show was deliberately scheduled by the BBC to be screened just after the UK's original EU departure date of 29 March. It was broadcast during April and is still available on iPlayer. Lucy Mangan, reviewing it in The Guardian, described it as a 'pitch-perfect portrait of the sins and sorrows of our time'. She is absolutely right.

### FORTHCOMING DATES

**08 June** Eid in the Park. Sandall Park 12.00 – 18.00. DCC will have a stall.

**09 June** Doncaster Half-marathon at the Keepmoat Stadium

**18 June** N Lincs Amnesty group are showing *Mary meets Muhammad* at Ashby Methodist Church, Scunthorpe 19.00

**18 June** Wharfedale Trust AGM, St George's Conference Centre, Leeds 14.00. Speakers include Inderjit Bhogal

**22 June** DCC outing to the Wildlife Park. Meet at 10.30

**22 June** The Big Picnic [outside CAST]

## Report from Khartoum

By John Poole [Sudan Link Working Group, with long experience of travelling to Sudan]

Report dated 15 May 2019

News headlines focus on the spectacular and they colour our imagination. Our eyes are captured by a flashing light, and our mind ignores the unexciting ordinariness of the rest of the seen. World headlines are about shootings in Sudan, and much of the talk on the street here is of Monday night's fire fight, when Army soldiers rushed in again to protect demonstrators at the sit-in protest. But all the action was within one acre. A mile away we all slept peacefully, undisturbed till the morning news.

The widespread problem is of roadblocks that hinder movement. Traffic in Khartoum is vastly reduced with people unable to cross the Nile or cross town. Typically, the road blocks are low walls, one or two bricks high, maybe not just one wall but a series of them creating lines across the road, sometimes with burning tyres. I cannot travel to Omdurman, and people in Omdurman cannot travel to see me, but it is possible to cross Khartoum, but traffic jams are created and drivers go the wrong way down one-way roads to bypass obstacles.

Today there's no electricity in Amarat, where the Cathedral is, and so computerised work is not possible. In central Khartoum I'm

fine. If I go to Amarat, there's no harassment on the streets: it is as safe as always.



A point of tension is coming as the Military Council is saying roads must be kept open. Movement of food products is blocked and the produce spoils. Key workers are not arriving at offices, power plants, banks. The US Embassy is saying that's the cause of last night's deaths, but others blame the RSF, the equivalent here of the US SWAT, commando type police controlled by the NISS. On the streets they say it is the Dama'saria, a word I've not heard before. It sounds as though it points to 'militia' or 'mercenary'. The NISS and RSF are widely blamed for creating armed militia groups who do their dirty work at arms-length for them. Nobody knows who gave the order and pulled the trigger. The use of them was widespread in Darfur and the killings of demonstrators earlier this year. In America they would be redneck lynching units.

Later 31 May

In case I've played down the drama too much – I've just returned from

Omdurman, hurrying to be back before iftar when all the drivers vanish to break their fast. One block away from where I'm staying, the dual carriageway was totally jammed by a great mass of people with speeches, shouting and chanting, like Trafalgar Square on steroids. I thought it judicious not to stop: I walked on past lines of police armed with long, thick riot sticks. Hopefully there will be no trouble, whilst 'the people' maintain the pressure for change.

It is a localized event which just happened to be in my way. But these are happening across Sudan, especially on Fridays as mosque sermons on the whole are supporting the revolution.

4 June

It is widely reported that 35 people have been killed as the military opened fire on the protestors.

## Events for Refugee Week

**CELEBRATE REFUGEE WEEK 2019**

10AM-12NOON | FRIDAY 21 JUNE  
CENTRAL FAMILY HUB, WELCOME WAY  
DONCASTER, DN1 3LE

**CELEBRATE REFUGEE WEEK**  
Join us as we celebrate Refugee Week with food, music and stories.

Find out about migration stories from throughout Doncaster's history.

Supported by Doncaster Conversation Club, Heritage Doncaster and Doncaster Adult, Family & Community Learning.

All welcome.

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## Swimming at the Dome

We booked to go to a 'Big Splash' session at the Dome during the half term week. We knew that, as it was Ramadhan, some people would be unable to join in - but it seemed right to offer something fun for children to do during the holiday. Nowadays, to qualify for the group booking reduction, there need to be 40 in the group. In the end, 41 members of DCC went - plus 5 volunteers. The group included 15 children and some adults who have never had the opportunity to swim before. We had representatives from Albania, Cameroon, El Salvador, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Gambia, Iran, Iraq, Malawi, Nigeria, Pakistan, Rwanda - plus volunteers from UK.



The feedback was very positive. It is great to see families being able to relax together - and for people who are under pressure from the asylum process being able to relax and have fun for an afternoon with friends.

### Some of the comments

We love this event, it's so exercising. Give us time to get away from many things running in our head. Was good for family - everyone enjoys together. Thank you so much.

Today I'm too happy because I relax and make sports with a place so I have no enough words to explain about todays all good or to explain my happiness.

Today we had lots of fun. The children were so happy today. Thank you for everything.

Today is I am happy. Today is very good. About today is I am swimming. Today is like swimming. Today am drinking coffee. Today is about friends.

The day was lovely, the Dome is a place beautiful for slide red and green. All the time we were happy.

It is been so fun. I really like the experience especially when I go on the slide and swimming with other people.

The water was blue and fun to play with dad.

I liked it when I was swimming because I had some help.

## Brief news headlines

### 1. Channel crossings - and the use of language

Last December, 138 'migrants' (as the BBC chooses to call them) were picked up by officials. This prompted the Home Secretary to declare a state of emergency. So far during May, 140 have been 'intercepted' (again, BBC language).

The crossings are very dependent on the weather. The end of last year was unseasonably mild leading to a spike in attempts to get to the UK.

The start of this year saw numbers fall again, as the weather worsened.

However, with summer approaching the sea is calm and the temperature is rising, so the Home Office is braced for more boats in the coming months.

On Friday, 18 migrants were picked up in a dinghy and brought to Dover.

Of the eight men found in waters off the Kent coast earlier, seven presented themselves as Iranian and one was an Afghan national.

The men were transferred to a Border Force vessel and taken to Dover at about 06:20 BST, the Home Office said. They were medically assessed before

being transferred to immigration officials.

Source: BBC

### 2. European Election results

#### Votes cast in Doncaster

Change UK - The Independent Group	1565
Conservative and Unionist Party	4122
English Democrats	953
Green Party	4898
Labour Party	11393
Liberal Democrats	5908
The Brexit Party	30016
The Yorkshire Party	3963
UK Independence Party (UKIP)	3862

#### Seats

The Brexit Party	3
Labour	1
Liberal Democrats	1
Green Party	1
Electorate	217343
Turnout	30.87%

Source: DMBC



The Green Party candidate and Somali refugee, Majid Majid, embarked on a Tour of Yorkshire to get to know the area beyond Sheffield.

### 3. Armthorpe concern

We can confirm that the English Democrats sticker in Armthorpe has been removed.

## Football welcomes refugees



### An Amnesty initiative

A record number of professional football clubs throughout Britain took part in Amnesty's Football Welcomes to celebrate the contribution refugees make to the game.

More than 160 – almost triple the number who were involved in 2018 – signed up for the third year of the initiative, in which free match tickets were distributed to refugees and people seeking asylum. In addition, some clubs helped to organise tournaments for refugees in their communities. Others had first-team players warming up in Football Welcomes T-shirts and promoted the events in their programmes and on their websites.

From the children fleeing the Spanish Civil War in the 1930s who went on to become some of the first refugees to play professionally here, to the likes of Granit Xhaka, Nadia Nadim and Victor Moses in more recent years, refugee players have been

making their mark on football for decades.

Amnesty International's survey showed two out of five football fans, some 41 per cent, believe there has been an increase in racism. More than a third (34 per cent) felt there had also been more xenophobia in the game over the last three years.

Almost a quarter (23 per cent) said they had personally witnessed an increase in racism and/or xenophobia, with one in 10 (12 per cent) revealing a personal experience of the increase. The majority (90 per cent) of football fans agreed that clubs have a responsibility to tackle the issues, with some 92 per cent feeling football clubs should be a 'force for good' in their local community and praise for the work already done in the local community.



### Doncaster Rovers 2 Coventry City 0

This was a very important match for Rovers. If they won, they would gain a place in the play-offs in League One, and potentially promotion to the Championship, the second tier of English football.

It was the final match of the season. Thanks to Doncaster Club Foundation, we, along with other community groups, were given

tickets to attend the match, and more than forty of us took up the offer. Most of us met at the Meeting House and then walked to the Stadium, a walk which takes the best part of half an hour.

It was a bright sunny day, but the wind was cold, which had an impact on both players and spectators.

The large crowd posed various challenges: the need to make sense of all the information presented on a match ticket, then to find the right seat, and even to know that there was a right seat to be found.

Fortunately, the crowd was in a good mood, enjoying a perhaps unexpected end to the season. 'We're on our way to Wembley' they shouted. The team struggled, not so much good football as on the previous occasion we attended. More tension. They scored a good goal after about half an hour which helped to calm things down.

We were all fascinated by the crowd control techniques used. At one point a fight seemed to break out among the Doncaster fans, and at the end there was a pitch invasion. The stewards, however, allowed this to take place but then contained the crowd and forced them gradually to move back in ways which maintained good humour and did not provoke conflict.



# A view from the edge Doncaster Conversation Club Newsletter

Based at the  
Quaker Meeting House  
Off St James St  
Doncaster DN1 3RH



To receive a copy of this newsletter by email, send a message to [Paulfitzp@aol.com](mailto:Paulfitzp@aol.com)

Please send your contributions and suggestions to the same address.

**Doncaster Conversation Club** offers opportunities for local people and people who have sought asylum in the UK to join together to share friendship, while offering support and practical help.

**The Club** seeks to create a relaxed, friendly and supportive environment, and works on the principles of

**Ownership** – *everyone can get involved*

**Impartiality** – *it is not affiliated to any political or religious body*

**Confidentiality** – *what you say is private*

**Respect** – *for each other's differences and individuality.*

DCC is pleased to acknowledge the support of **Doncaster Society of Friends (Quakers), The Red Cross, The Refugee Council, Migrant Help, DIAL Doncaster, The Doncaster Clinical Commissioning Group, St Leger Homes, Club Doncaster Foundation, Ongo M25 Services, YMCA, DARTS, CAST, Fareshare, The Brelms Trust, The Ruth Hayman Trust and Doncaster Minster.**

The Doncaster Conversation Club is run entirely by volunteers with the support of occasional grants for specific activities, currently from the Allen Lane Foundation, and the Wharfedale Trust

The views expressed in this newsletter are those of the individual contributors.

**Paul FitzPatrick**

Doncaster Conversation Club  
Doncaster, South Yorkshire

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