

THE MARY THOMPSON FUND

Supporting refugees and people seeking sanctuary in the Tees Valley

Annual Report 2019

The Mary Thompson Fund is a hardship fund set up in 2001 by Trudie Thompson with the help of our chair Peter Widlinski in memory of her sister Mary Thompson. The fund's aim is to support refugees and those seeking asylum in the Tees Valley. The initial group who set up the fund has changed over the years and now consists of 8 members each bringing their unique talents to the fund.

Two of the fundraising highlights of the year were a 'Hat and Accessory' sale afternoon and a 'Ploughwoman's Lunch', both of which made a significant contribution to our funds. The Ploughwoman's Lunch was held in Satburn and highlighted the charitable result of the use of Fair Trade Rice. Mary Thompson Fund buys FairTrade rice directly from a local Tradecraft source to augment the donation of rice that we receive and the proceed from this directly goes to help children in Africa go to school.

In 2018 the Mayor of Stockton named The Mary Thompson Fund as her chosen charity for the Mayors Fund during her tenure. 2018/2019 saw her holding a number of charity events and this, coupled with various donations from supporters who donate by regular monthly direct debit, one off donations and donations from Trusts, churches and charitable organisation, lead to us having a surplus of £25,992.28 to be carried forward to 2019

Once again this year, the increase in demand for weekly destitute payments has left less money for additional hardship payments. As well as the weekly £5.00 payment and the bag of food given to destitute refugees, we have given money for hospital visits, essential extras for those with special medical needs such as pregnancy, diabetes and mental health problems, visits to seek legal advice and school uniforms, the latter is increasing because of the withdrawal of other funding. We have given grants help to travel to North Shields, Liverpool and Durham for people to attend UK Border Agency and Biometric appointments. We also spend money buying rice and other articles for the weekly food bags; which is augmented by donations of food and toiletries received from churches, schools and individuals. All donated money goes directly to the people that it is intended, with trustees taking no remunerations or expenses.

We are a small committee of 8 people who have professional and personal experience in the field of asylum work. We meet as a committee every two months to do the core work of the Fund and to brain storm about funding and events. A sub group of 3 meet monthly to vet individual requests for assistance and to go over the weekly £5 payments.

Our aim is to support people who are seeking sanctuary but have been refused asylum. The refusal is often due to a lack of evidence and a climate of disbelief within the immigration services. Although it is sometimes accepted that people are victims of torture and recognized that they need to flee persecution, they are refused protection in this country because it is deemed that is safe to return them to the place where they have suffered the torture. Often people cannot be removed because there is no safe route of return yet they are given no Government support. This leaves many individuals without support as they are not allowed to work. The number of asylum seekers currently with nowhere to sleep is increasing. People come to us in the desperate hope that we can provide accommodation. It causes us great distress to be faced with individuals who may not have slept in a bed for many weeks. These people suffer from sleep deprivation, hunger and the indignity of being unable to maintain personal hygiene and the relentless fear of being returned to danger by the degradation of their daily living conditions. Unfortunately, although at one time we did pay for emergency accommodation we no longer have the funds to do this which is something we would like to resume but is impossible in the current financial climate.

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Annual Report 2019 - Continued

During the year we received donations of nearly new clothing, bedding, baby clothing and blankets, baby items such as prams, highchairs, toys plus household items and white goods. These things are distributed through Justice First, in Stockton, and the John Paul Centre, in Middlesbrough. We also have many very kind volunteers who make sure that any donations we receive are clean, safe and suitable to be reused. We also have people who have been clients and have now gained permission to remain, returning to volunteer.

Over the year we have visited many schools, colleges, churches, church groups and individual groups to talk about the work we do and dispel some myths. Our Trustees are always willing to give talks to groups however large or small

We produce a regular newsletter which is generating quite a following of people who tell us they really enjoy reading it!! It enables us to keep people informed of developments in the field of asylum, tells them how their donations are being used and allows us to say thank you, as well as giving some anecdotal updates which enables our very caring supporters to become closer to the vulnerable people they are so kindly helping. Appeals that go out occasionally with the newsletter always are met with a very generous response.

Throughout the year we were given donations of food from many schools, churches and individuals. These donations helped the funds immensely as the bill for food etc. has increased again this year. People are so very generous and without them we would be unable to give out our food bags. We also have a small core of people who give regular monthly donations by direct debit and this allows us to ensure that we are able to assist the most vulnerable members of our clients throughout the year. It would be superb if we could increase this amount. We would like to give our thanks and appreciation to the numerous churches, schools, individuals and organisations who, during the year, donate toiletries and food to the fund. The money we save by not having to buy these items is used to provide more destitute payments. We are also grateful for the support given to us throughout the year by Justice First and the John Paul Centre in Middlesbrough.

The need for the fund is increasing but, because of the economic climate, donations are decreasing. We are striving to increase the amount received monthly from direct debits and are always looking into other forms of funding either through grants or one off fundraising events.

Our special thanks goes to the many volunteers who befriend refugees, accompany them to appointments with lawyers, courts etc, those who give their time advising refugees and distributing the food bags and who generally help and comfort our clients. These people receive no payment for their time and very often use their own resources to fund their volunteering. The part they play in running the fund is vital and is very much appreciated.

Veronica Wallace
Treasurer
June 2020

Keep Safe Keep Well and Keep Dreaming of a Kinder World.

Mary Thompson Fund, c/o Justice First, 133 Norton Rd,
Stockton-on-Tees, TS18 2BG

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marythompsonfund@gmail.com

Charity Number 1112610

Mary Thompsonfund@gmail.com

Supported by the generous donations of individuals & local organisations

Total Statement of Accounts 2019

Account Number 20103929/2023159

		Income		Expenditure	
Jan-19	Credits	<u>£1,675.49</u>			£3,000.00
		£1,675.49			£3,000.00
	Income /Expenditure				
Feb-19	Credits	<u>£2,353.70</u>		Debit	<u>£3,397.49</u>
		£2,353.70			£3,397.49
	Income /Expenditure				
Mar-19	Credits	<u>£2,322.77</u>		Debit	<u>£2,683.25</u>
		£2,322.77			£2,683.25
	Income /Expenditure				
Apr-19	Credits	<u>£12,389.00</u>		Debit	<u>£3,000.00</u>
		£12,389.00			£3,000.00
	Income /Expenditure				
May-19	Credits	<u>£13,631.35</u>		Debit	<u>£2,901.99</u>
		£13,631.35			£2,901.99
	Income /Expenditure				
Jun-19	Credits	<u>£1,202.06</u>		Debit	<u>£2,909.16</u>
		£1,202.06			£2,909.16
	Income /Expenditure				
Jul-19	Credits	<u>£3,483.30</u>		Debit	<u>£5,576.41</u>
		£3,483.30			£5,576.41
	Income /Expenditure				
Aug-19	Credits	<u>£1,134.00</u>		Debit	<u>£0.00</u>
		£1,134.00			£0.00
	Income /Expenditure				
Sep-19	Credits	<u>£2,112.94</u>		Debit	<u>£3,958.00</u>
		£2,112.94			£3,958.00
	Income /Expenditure				
Oct-19	Credits	<u>£7,156.50</u>		Debit	<u>£15,664.72</u>
		£7,156.50			£15,664.72
	Income /Expenditure				
Nov-19	Credits	<u>£1,604.00</u>		Debit	<u>£0.00</u>
		£1,604.00			£0.00
	Income /Expenditure				
Dec-19	Credits	<u>£2,359.90</u>		Debit	<u>£18.00</u>
		£2,359.90			£18.00
	Income /Expenditure				
Opening balance		£17,676.29			
Credits		£51,425.01	Debits	#REF!	£43,109.02
Balance at 31st December 2019		£25,992.28			

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