

## Inclusion in Church activities

Helping AS&R integrate in the church life is important to foster a sense of belonging and community. Inclusion in practical tasks, refreshment and welcome rotas or children's ministries, add a sense of normality and being treated like everyone else. Many AS&R have qualifications and skills which they would love to contribute to the church family. Like all volunteers, our AS&R friends need to undertake Safeguarding training. Get in touch with Angie Letchford via the church office for advice on how to help them do this. Belonging to a Life Group is also key for discipleship and fellowship.

## Practical Help and Finances

Asylum Seekers are not allowed to receive payment for work. However, many like to help with practical tasks such as gardening or decorating. Allowing them to help eases boredom and gives dignity. However, make sure that they are clear about how you want things done to avoid disappointments on both sides.

Please remember that you must not pay them for their help under any circumstances as this may create legal difficulties for both them and you. However, a gift or an invitation for a meal is of course possible. This also applies to giving them money directly. Consider donating money to our designated section within the church account, mentioning AS&R to make sure it goes to the support of our AS&R within church (see bank details on the church website).

## Wider Support Network for AS&R

Befriending asylum seekers and refugees does not mean you are required to sort out every problem, give financial support or legal advice. Lancaster City of Sanctuary supports several well established groups and activities for AS&Rs. These groups have expert knowledge and can give up-to-date advice. Please direct your friends to them for additional support where appropriate.

### English Classes

Eleanor Denvir

[e.denvir@globalink.org.uk](mailto:e.denvir@globalink.org.uk)

### Global Link

Gisela Renolds

[g.renolds@globalink.org.uk](mailto:g.renolds@globalink.org.uk)

### Refugee Advocacy, Information and Support (RAIS)

Caitlin Luna, [caitlin@rais.org.uk](mailto:caitlin@rais.org.uk)

### East Meets West

Jane Lippitt, [lippittjane@gmail.com](mailto:lippittjane@gmail.com)

## for more information

### St Thomas' AS&R Support Network

[asr@st.tees.org.uk](mailto:asr@st.tees.org.uk)

### St Thomas Church Website

[www.st.tees.org.uk](http://www.st.tees.org.uk)

<http://bit.ly/395bZbD>

AS&R Notice Board and Welcome Desk

# WELCOMING AND SUPPORTING ASYLUM SEEKERS AND REFUGEES



"I WAS A STRANGER AND YOU  
WELCOMED ME"

MATTHEW 25:35



**ST THOMAS**  
CHURCH LANCASTER  
SHARING GOD'S LOVE FROM THE HEART OF THE CITY

## Friendship First

Most Asylum Seekers and Refugees (AS&R) go to church to worship God, not to solve immigration issues or relive trauma. Some are reluctant to open up about their circumstances and may even feel ashamed or embarrassed by them so be sensitive. Try not to make assumptions or appear too intrusive.

A few general questions should establish some basics, perhaps something about family and country of origin or how long they have been in Lancaster. Trust develops as you take time to get to know them. Often informal settings like a home, or a coffee shop or a walk in a park enable deeper conversation rather than a Sunday morning in church.

## Other information about yourself

Don't just ask your new friend all the questions. Volunteer information about yourself and your family. Share photos and experiences from your own life.

For some, just being in a loving, supportive church will be all they need. Others may require a great deal of practical help and emotional support. Whatever they need, having friends is the most important thing.

## Mind your language

For AS&R's English is generally their second or third language. Some have very limited English and others are more fluent.

### Use simple language

This is not the same as 'dumbing down', it is just using words clearly and slowly. Be prepared to repeat or re-phrase to aid understanding. Don't speak more loudly to compensate! **Google Translate** is a helpful tool to clarify words and meanings.

Be aware that the Christian language we often use is at times inaccessible and some words may need an explanation.

English classes are offered by City of Sanctuary, Lancaster and Morecambe College and Lancaster City Council. To find out more information about English classes, see contact details on the last page or visit their websites.

## Bibles and Literature in other languages

Bibles in different languages to borrow are available on the shelf beside the Welcome Desk. If they don't have their own Bible yet, speak to one of us from the ASR committee (see notice board at the back of church). There is live translation available during the services. Ask them to scan the QR code on the screen or speak to the tech team for help.

## Understanding British Culture

In order to navigate living in the UK, AS&Rs need to understand British culture. What may appear obvious to a British person may seem quite strange to those from another culture.



There are some helpful information and conversation topics on the following websites: <https://erudera.com/united-kingdom/uk-traditions/> and [greatbritishmag.co.uk/uk-culture/10-things-you-should-know-about-uk-culture/](https://greatbritishmag.co.uk/uk-culture/10-things-you-should-know-about-uk-culture/)

## Hospitality: invite and reciprocate

Sometimes foreigners live in the UK for many years before they are ever invited into a British home. A social invitation says a great deal about how you value someone. It makes them feel welcome. Many AS&R come from cultures where hospitality is important. Be prepared to be invited back and be prepared for the invite to include food (even if they have little or no money). Accepting the invitation and making time to eat together makes a huge difference to their sense of self-worth. Opportunities to cook and share food together are very important but hospitality is not always a meal in the home. It can include taking your friends out for coffee, going for a walk or including them in a social activity you both might enjoy.