

the **Asylum Link Merseyside**

2020

covid-19 diary part 2



**Thanks from everyone at ALM**

# The ALM Corona Diary June to August 2020

Hopefully everyone's doing ok and there's not too much wall climbing going on. We've been in a holding pattern for a while and the emphasis has moved from getting people housing and support, to tackling the ongoing issues people face when isolated and lack information or other resources.



Food, food, food, more food, bagged food, sacks of food, food deliveries to the houses, to people's front doors, to hotels, to Initial Accommodation Centres and overseas to the Wirral. The most difficult thing to deal with has been the fresh food which you have use quickly. Generally there's always been enough and when there's too much we've given it out to the volunteers, or anyone who's been able to take it. Like recycling the clothes, nothing is ever wasted.

We're indebted to Fareshare, Costco, Tesco, Jack's and all the organisations and individuals (including St Anne's Primary, the West Kirby Food Fairies & Raif and Zeli!)who contribute to the 'tonnage', including our friends at Greens



for Good. More recently the allotments have started to produce, and although it can never feed everyone, food freshly picked is something that just cheers you up. Ron and Emma have kept the plots going, and now more people are going up on a Tuesday to harvest and weed. Ron's had to fight a rear-guard action with 'the committee' as there is a big demand for plots and

we have two and a half! This, along with Bike Rides, are two of the activities we feel reasonably confident to run. The recent local Covid spikes made activity at the centre more risky, just as we were planning to slowly open again. This has put us back around a month.

The teachers wound down the classes at the end of July, but some have kept their Zoom & Whatsapp conversation groups going during the period. We had ordered



books for the classes - set texts to work from at home - but half the books went missing. After weeks of being shunted back and forward from the Book Depository, Amazon and the delivery people the books couldn't be found, and we got a refund. Then 2 months later, they turn up just as the classes were stopping. I guess we'll be able to use them in

September. The face to face classes will not take place while there are still contact restrictions. Ventilation in the classrooms is not great and space is tight, so we'll stick to online teaching for the short to medium term. There are 26 teachers using a variety of methods, from Whatsapp, video and questionnaires, to live teaching with Zoom. Some classes ran from 9 in the morning until almost 9 at night, with people joining and leaving and rejoining, sending work in to be marked, or photographs about what they were up to.

During the last few months the Asylum Seekers placed in hotels around the region have been wondering what the future holds for them. The last we heard, the accommodation contracts have been extended through to October. There was the dreadful incident in Glasgow, where one man had

# The Herald

## Park Inn attack: Six injured in Glasgow hotel stabbing

a breakdown and attacked other people, before being shot dead. Described by others at the hotel as "quiet and polite and a decent guy", hundreds tried to attend the funeral of Badreddin Abadilla Adam from Sudan.

However this extreme behaviour might not come as a complete surprise; one of our own service users described the hotel where she stayed as 'like a prison'. Most of the hotels have been pretty awful; poor food, lack of contact with the outside world, lack of resources, with difficulties accessing GPs and medication.

We became aware that people were feeling depressed, even suicidal, and kept in touch with them while getting health services and others involved.

One Hotel that bucked the trend was in Hoylake, where, unlike in other places, local people were able to contact the Asylum Seekers and set up alternatives to the statutory support on offer, providing meals, clothing and friendship. Local Health Services also got involved and made sure the health pathway was clear and known to the people trying to use it. ITV Granada ran a feature which you can see here. [www.youtube.com/watch?v=gYjFK15Acld&feature=youtu.be](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gYjFK15Acld&feature=youtu.be)

But some people are never happy, and it would be wrong to ignore the anti-asylum noises that continue to rumble on. Nigel Farage's visit to the North West seemed designed purely to stir up resentment, and following on from the Government's Hostile Environment Policy, Patel and Johnson are bent on building higher walls and changing laws, to make it more difficult for Refugees to reach safety.



Give refugees crossing Channel a chance, say Windrush survivors

Priti Patel risks replicating Home Office failings that led to scandal, victims and human rights campaigners warn



Britain's obsession with immigration is gradually taking us down a pathway where 'the other, the foreigner' can be blamed for all the ills of society. Just so no one is in any doubt.

**Britain takes far fewer refugees than other countries – most either stay in their country of origin and are internally displaced, or go to the country next door.**

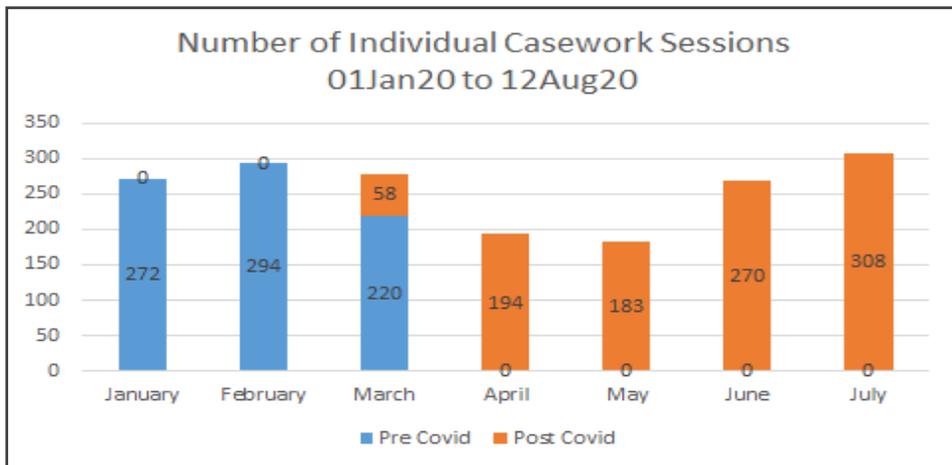
Syria 2020 – 6.2 million people not living in their own homes. 1 million Refugees in Lebanon, 750,000 in Jordan. In Yemen there are 24.3 million people in need and 3.65 million internally displaced because of the war. In the UK we had 45,000 applications for Asylum in the past year

Compared to the European Union the UK is:

- 6<sup>th</sup> in terms of the absolute numbers of Asylum claims (France 2<sup>nd</sup>)
- 18<sup>th</sup> in terms of asylum claims per head of population (France 9<sup>th</sup>)
- 18<sup>th</sup> in terms of asylum claims versus GDP (France 7<sup>th</sup>)

The Reason for including France in the narrative is that everyone seems to be complaining about France sending people our way. Personally I wouldn't be surprised if they did: we've not been very nice to our neighbours in recent years.

We have also seen some very harrowing and complicated cases, including trafficking, mental ill-health and self harm, which is draining. Staff and volunteers are beginning to take a break now and recharge their batteries as it's been a very long run from the spring. During all this time we have managed to keep a lot of our services running, in particular the destitution, social work and casework services. To give you an idea here are the number of casework sessions delivered from January to July.



As we move into the Autumn, there's more work to be done on the allotments and we'd really love to get going with the bikes. On a slightly sadder note, there will be no Table Tennis Team this year as the Covid restrictions make it too risky for some of our players to take part. Thanks to Dave, Davshil, Sami and all the boys for their TT efforts over the years and we hope to be back up and running in 2021/22. Thanks to everyone for all their help in the past few months. Good luck and take care. Ewan and all the team.