

The Saint Charles and Sacred Heart Justice & Peace Group wishes all its supporters a peaceful Christmas and a prosperous 2026



For several years, the opening page of this newsletter has featured a section the Diocesan Refugee Project. [Justice & Peace Refugee Project - Diocese of Hexham & Newcastle \(diocesehn.org.uk\)](http://Justice & Peace Refugee Project - Diocese of Hexham & Newcastle (diocesehn.org.uk)). The project has been operating for almost twenty five years and, in recent times has seen a sharp increase in need for its services. The project is not alone in this. All the foodbanks and support services for those in need across the region have seen large increases in demand; and this is not going to go away any time soon.

St Charles and Sacred Heart have always been generous supporters of the Diocesan Refugee Project. We are aware that our parishes can only give so much, but can we ask that you look to find a way to maybe give a little bit more to the collection boxes at the back of the church in 2026. Thank you.

The items for which there is the greatest need are (reproduced from the project website):

Items needed for the weekly pre-packed bags provided to all our clients:	Donations that offer all our clients a few additional food items of their choice per visit:		Hygiene and cleaning products that offer all our clients one or two items of their choice per week:
Toilet roll	Rice (standard size packet)	Cooking oil	Deodorant
Individual packet of biscuits	Sugar (standard size packet)	Spices/dried herbs	Toothpaste
Tinned tomatoes	Pasta	Tinned fruit	Toothbrushes
Tinned fish	Table Salt	Tinned vegetables	Shampoo / 2 in 1 with conditioner
Chickpeas	Flour	Custard / Rice Pudding	Male & female deodorants
	Cooking Sauces e.g., pasta sauce	Porridge / cereals	Sanitary pads
	Condiments (ketchup/mayo/jam)	Tea / Coffee	Washing -up liquid / surface & toilet cleaners
	Juice / cordial	Long-life milk	Detergents (which can be decanted)
Note: we are grateful for your continued collections of these items. We will notify parishes of any revisions to these core items if we feel our clients' needs/wants are changing.	Note: All miscellaneous food donations help us to provide an interesting and varied selection for our clients. The above are the most popular items. We cannot store perishable foods, but fresh produce can be received on a Wednesday or Friday morning for distribution on the same day (if received between 9.30am and 10.30am or by prior arrangement).		Note: although our clients are adults not children, we are regularly asked by parents if we have baby wipes / nappies / baby milk. We do not request donations of these items but can certainly receive & distribute them.



Supporting: CAFOD Special Projects; Prisoners of Conscience; Liturgy; Fundraising; and Justice & Peace awareness at home & abroad. For further information: Tel 07427837813 or visit the parish websites at www.stcharlesgosforth.org.uk

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or
[Sacred Heart RC Parish, North Gosforth \(sacredheartng.org.uk\)](http://Sacred Heart RC Parish, North Gosforth (sacredheartng.org.uk))

Upcoming events:

- There are two Prisoner of Conscience Greeting Cards events coming up at St Charles: at The “Write for Rights” Coffee mornings on Wednesday 26th November and Sunday J&P coffee on December 7th.
- Pax Christi and NJPN UK are hosting a special evening on December 1 at 7.30pm ONLINE titled *Christ Among the Ruins: Finding Light in Gaza’s Darkness*. It is described as a live webinar and conversation of faith, witness, and action. Anybody wishing to take part can register by clicking [here](#).

Refugees and asylum seekers: the facts

Over the past few years, the issue of asylum seekers and refugees coming to the UK has become a political touchstone. Anger and rage are being stoked on social media and in certain sections of the press. The people of this country are being told, by those who are weaponizing the issue, that we need to be afraid of these people who are, apparently, invading our country and who, by their presence, create a threat to our society. Violence and intimidation are simmering below the surface, and incidents of racism and hate crime are increasing. It is perhaps time to take a look at some of the facts, rather than the rhetoric.

- Asylum seekers do not have an easy life in the UK. If they are part of the 31% placed in hotels, where food is generally provided, they will receive approximately £10/week. If they are placed in accommodation where meals are not provided, they receive £49/week.
- Not all asylum applications are successful. In 2024, the acceptance rate was 49%, (this varies considerably year on year). Of those whose applications are rejected, 75% appeal and about a third of those appeals are successful. Putting those figures together, almost two thirds of all applications for asylum are successful. Appeals cannot be made frivolously; they must be based on new evidence or by demonstrating errors in the process. Sometimes, several appeals are made before an initial decision is overturned and that process can take many years.
- These figures demonstrate the dangers of returning asylum applicants to their countries of origin if their initial application is refused, as some of the people opposed to the presence of asylum seekers in the UK suggest. A great many vulnerable people would be sent back to very dangerous situations.
- Asylum seekers who are refused permission to stay are made destitute. They lose their right to accommodation and financial support, even if they have appealed. (The exception is people with children, who are protected by the provisions of the Children's Act).
- The North East of England is home to 2.7 million people. According to information published by Police and Crime Commissioners across the region, the number of asylum seekers in December 2024 was 7600, less than 0.3% of the population.

- There is no evidence to support statements to the effect that asylum seekers come to the UK to scrounge off the benefits system. The system in the UK is less generous than that in other European countries through which they pass to get here.
- In 2024, the UK received around 108,100 asylum applicants, the 5th highest when compared with the EU+ (the EU-27 plus Switzerland and the three EEA countries, Iceland, Liechtenstein, and Norway). When adjusted by population size, [it received the 17th highest number of applications](#): 16 per 10,000 residents.
- IN 2024, the EU+ and the UK combined took in approximately one million refugees and asylum seekers. In 2024, there were 123 million forcibly displaced people in the world. Of these 8.4 million were thought to be asylum seekers. It is a fact that the burden of caring for refugees and asylum seekers falls mainly on countries which are already poor. Europe, and the UK, does relatively little.
- And finally, please try to think of refugees and asylum seekers as people like yourself. Ask yourself this question. How desperate would you need to be if you thought that your best option was to put your child on a flimsy boat to cross 22 miles of the most dangerous seas in the world?

Saudi Arabia and the North East

It is now four years since the Public Investment Fund of Saudi Arabia (the PIF is Saudi Arabia's sovereign wealth fund. It is one of the largest in the world, with assets estimated at around \$941 billion) bought an 85% share of Newcastle United. Concerns about the ethics of allowing this purchase, in particular with regards to the human rights record of the Saudi Arabian Government rumble on. North East Bylines has been regularly reviewing what life is like in the Middle Eastern kingdom and what has happened there since that takeover and their latest findings can be viewed [here](#).



The bookstall at St Charles is ongoing - bring and buy and your donations will help 6 homeless charities.