

ASSIST Sheffield Tackling Inequalities Fund Year 1 Report

ASSIST Sheffield is a volunteer-focused charity supporting destitute asylum seekers through accommodation, advocacy and welfare provision, bringing about positive change in the lives of highly vulnerable and marginalised people. We also challenge destitution through education and awareness-raising. Established 15 years ago, ASSIST is widely recognised as a leading organisation working with destitute asylum seekers in the UK and is unique in the Sheffield area. Destitute asylum seekers have no recourse to public funds or accommodation.

ASSIST received a £14,000 grant in 17/18 as a contribution toward core running costs to help achieve two main outcomes

1. Destitute asylum seekers in Sheffield experience improved quality of life.
2. Increased sense of resilience, confidence and understanding (of their situation) amongst destitute asylum seekers.

Key achievements from last year:-

- Our Help-desk responded to 174 individuals, issuing 750 Food bank referrals and made 64 referrals to the Archer Homeless Project.
- Our Support and Advocacy Team supported 160 clients from 36 countries holding 1442 Advocacy appointments.
- 42 clients moved on to statutory support (whilst appealing their asylum claim or making new claim).
- 54 Clients accompanied to 280 appointments
- We accommodated 113 people, 74 in long term hosting and 39 who only used emergency Night Shelter (35 used both Night Shelter and long term hosting). Taking the total number of bednights' accommodation provided we have calculated that this potentially saves Sheffield Council and associated local services over £750k per year.
- Volunteer Dividend - 393 volunteers providing an average of 3080 volunteer hours per month is equivalent to paying staff at real living wage £323,400 per year.

"ASSIST offered me a lifeline when I needed it the most. Their monetary support really saved me, but the opportunity to volunteer with them and help people in a similar situation to my own meant I had a support group of people who I could talk to, and were on my side. I really don't know how to thank ASSIST, I'm not sure how I would have coped without them."

"I felt rejected, alone and in despair until I found ASSIST. Now I have a roof over my head, support and hope for my future"

What our clients say

"ASSIST supported me when I was at my most desperate. I became aware of them through a friend, and initially started volunteering for them within their recruitment and training team in 2016. The work they do is so vital that I really wanted to be a part of it. Volunteering with ASSIST offered me the opportunity to actually do things, and engage with people. I managed to also apply for ASSIST support, and was assessed by their internal team, and granted £20 per week, as well as access to food banks and information about the best way to approach the asylum process."

What some of our partner organisations say

Red Cross Sheffield

"We are very lucky in Sheffield to work alongside ASSIST and have their invaluable support available to the individuals we support. Their work providing vital accommodation and subsistence support is a lifeline for many where there is nothing else available. We value our partnership work greatly and work together to ensure that we are reaching as many of the individuals that need our support as possible."

Voluntary Action Sheffield

"ASSIST is an excellent example of the power of volunteering and enabling volunteers to use their skills. They have highly skilled volunteers in responsible roles leading teams as well as hundreds of volunteers doing bite sized tasks across the year. I can't think of any other organisation with this staffing level that has such a breadth or opportunities and volume of volunteers."

City of Sanctuary Sheffield

"ASSIST and its supporters help to protect the humanity of some of the most marginalised people in society. By attending to the mental and physical needs of those who've initially been refused protection, ASSIST helps to rebuild their self esteem and well-being. That is why, with ASSIST support, many go on to submit successful applications and become useful and contributing members of society."

What our volunteers say

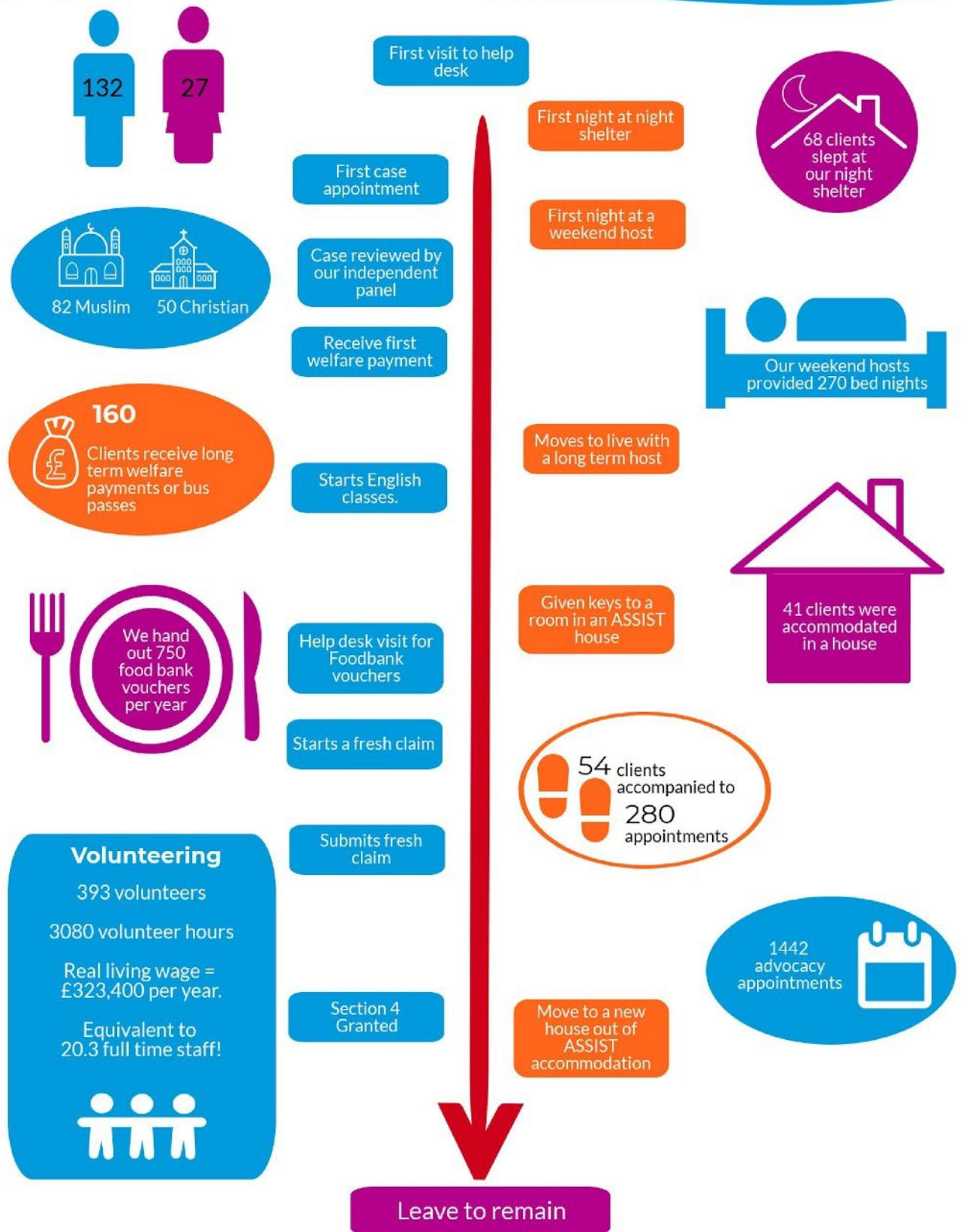
"ASSIST helps asylum seekers by providing accommodation in a number of multi-occupancy properties. The voluntary work that I do is, using my DIY skills, helping to refurbish and maintain these properties. I have paid for my own place in the London Marathon so all your donations will go directly to ASSIST"

"I have become very impressed by the resilience and determination of the people that have struggled to arrive in Sheffield and the optimism they retain in often very trying circumstances. Volunteering with ASSIST has made me put into perspective any problems I may encounter in my own life. I began volunteering with ASSIST with relatively little knowledge regarding the difficulties that people faced when they are homeless due to being refused asylum."

"As well as being able to keep the night shelter running, volunteering has helped me learn and grow too. I've made some close friends with the other volunteers and broadened my view of the amazing groups which exist in Sheffield. I am so glad to be a regular night shelter volunteer and would encourage anyone interested to give it a go for themselves."

Example Client Journey

ASSIST
SHEFFIELD



Our clients experience an **improved quality of life** as we provide accommodation, welfare payments and access to advocacy and support. This is in response to clients who consistently inform us that their biggest worries and causes of anxiety are their lack of stable accommodation, their legal status and their lack of income.

"I felt rejected, alone and in despair until I found ASSIST. Now I have a roof over my head, support and hope for my future"

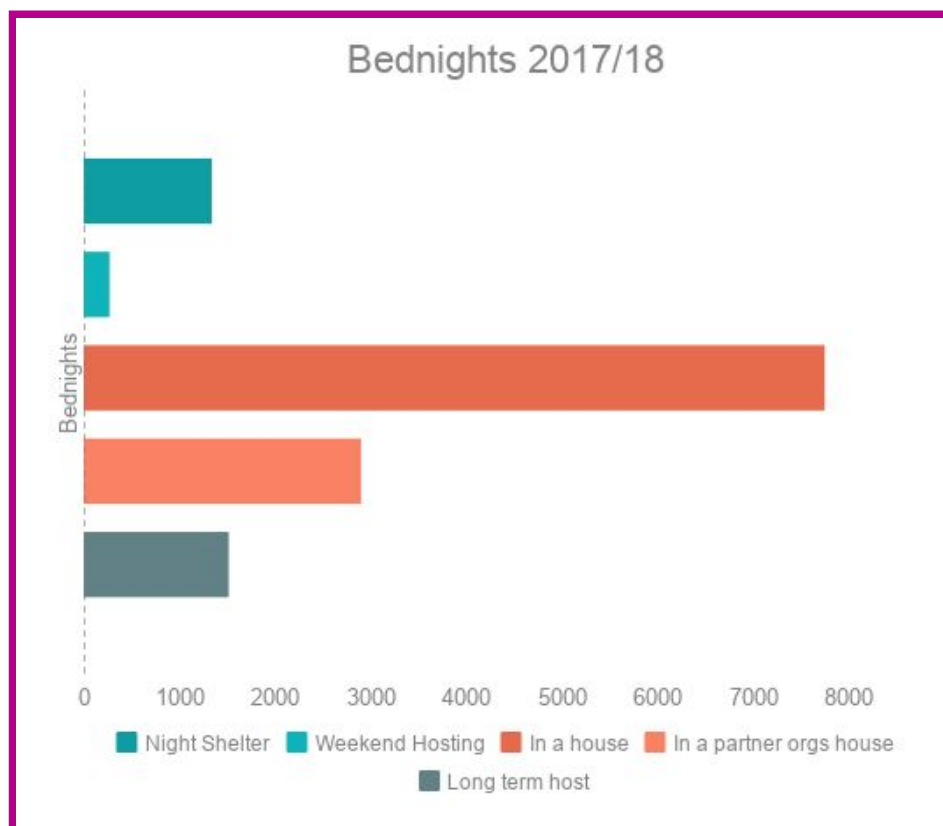
ASSIST is saving Sheffield Council and associated local services **£754,630** per year (Based on At What Cost, Crisis, 2015, and 13,772 ASSIST bed nights in 2017/18)

ASSIST **reduces street homelessness** among destitute asylum seekers in Sheffield by providing an emergency Night Shelter, long term accommodation in ASSIST houses and Hosting services.

ASSIST helps to **reduce poverty** amongst destitute asylum seekers by providing welfare payments of £20 a week, or £10 plus a bus pass per week. For high risk asylum seekers ASSIST provides emergency payments and/or referral to Foodbanks.

ASSIST provides our clients with access to life **enriching opportunities** to help reduce their social isolation. Several clients benefit from volunteering themselves with ASSIST to help their fellow asylum seekers.

We know from conversations with both clients and volunteers that being involved with ASSIST has resulted in reduced stress and anxiety and **increased resilience, confidence and understanding of their situations**. For example we have a volunteer accompanying team who, upon request, will accompany clients to their Home Office appointments. Clients who have utilised this service have reported that this has reduced their anxiety and they feel more secure in having someone there who can advise and support should something 'unexpected happen'.



"I am in the ASSIST events team. I helped sign people in at their annual general meeting last year. It was good to see all the people that care about asylum seekers. I've helped at ASSIST market stalls too, it can be a long day, but you get to chat to lots of different people. Lots of people in Sheffield don't know very much about ASSIST. It's good to tell them what we do and then they can understand the difference it makes to people like me."

There are a number of resources which ASSIST makes available to our clients to facilitate a better quality of life. The library of resources started as a paper-based file compiled by Helpdesk volunteers. The expansion and updating of the library is now done by an ASSIST volunteer and others as the website <https://asylumjourney.org.uk/> develops. This is a user-friendly web-based facility for staff and volunteers who are supporting asylum seekers. A paper file of the most commonly used 'quality of life' agencies is available for immediate access by caseworkers.

ASSIST volunteers and staff signpost clients but recognise that clients may be reticent to go alone the first time so they also arrange for first visits to be accompanied, either by other clients or ASSIST accompaniers.

**42 clients moved on to statutory support
(40 - Section 4, 1 - Section 95, 1 - Refugee Status)**

ASSIST encourages clients to proactively engage and take practical action to address their situations. Whilst ASSIST cannot provide legal advice ourselves, we work in close partnership with South Yorkshire Refugee Law & Justice (SYRLJ) as well as numerous solicitor firms. We support clients to gain their evidence which will allow them, via their solicitors, to submit fresh claims for

refugee status. In partnership with SYRLJ we currently have a funding application pending that would enable us to vastly increase the legal support provided to our clients. 28 clients have been referred to SYRLJ, 17 clients are actively working on fresh claims with solicitors, whilst 28 other clients are also registered with solicitors.

The regular appointments with our Support and Advocacy Teams are designed to help clients become more resilient and to ensure they fully understand their situation and their options.

160 Clients from around the world

