

nottingham & nottinghamshire refugee forum

# anti destitution group

## SUPPORTING DESTITUTE ASYLUM

Destitute asylum seekers come along to NNRF on Tuesday mornings. There, a small group of volunteers works with them, to provide referrals to the food group and, if possible, a small amount of cash.

The cash is provided monthly - £10 to last the four weeks, or, exceptionally, £20 for 4 weeks for people with severe health problems. Those who who can't carry/cook food, generally because they have no fixed place to live, can have tickets for two hot meals a week instead of the referral to the food group.

This project began in June 2004. Until recently, everyone whose asylum application had been refused, and whose state support had therefore ended, could receive this support. However, because the numbers of people were constantly increasing, we found that we were supporting around 140 people at over £2,000 per month (for cash and lunch tickets combined). All the money we give has to be raised by donations - we receive no grants or other support for this work. Our supporters and members are extremely generous, but we were not able to continue spending at this rate.

So, sadly, in March 2007 we had to reduce our spending. The new system aims to target the most desperate (so we are faced with deciding which of the desperate are more desperate than others), and the numbers we are now supporting have dropped to about 65. This situation is not totally gloomy because, during the regular interviews that all claimants now have so that we can establish their circumstances, we have been able to identify other problems that we have been able to help with - e.g. isolation. The aim is now to turn Tuesday mornings into sessions where many aspects of destitution can be addressed, and other help, advice and referrals given.

We have been told, by asylum seekers, that they really value having even a small amount of cash. It contributes to human dignity. Our supporters responded magnificently when the financial crisis happened earlier in the year, and we now have more standing orders than ever. (The standing orders nearly cover the current cash expenditure of just over £1000 per month.) People also organised all sorts of fundraising events, from coffee mornings to sponsored marathons and hill climbing, and have used their imaginations to help support the Destitution Fund. One-off donations have poured in too, some fantastically generous. However, we can't afford to be complacent - although we now have enough funds for the project to be sustainable into

the foreseeable future, this is only if people continue to be generous and imaginative, as our income must also cover the spending of the Food Group, lunch tickets and occasional small grants made by advisors to people with particular needs. And it would be nice to be able to support more people.

What can you do with £10 a month? Well, without it, you couldn't: make phone calls; get on a bus; buy a stamp; get new underwear or other personal items . . . Obviously the list is endless, but we hope we are giving people the chance to do something they need to do, which otherwise they couldn't, and to have a tiny bit of control over their own lives.

As a matter of interest, since the project began three years ago, we have given £60,000 in cash and a further £12,000 in lunch tickets to destitute asylum seekers with no other means of support. This has been from a total number of 4,000 visits. Some people have been destitute for a long, long time. If we continue to spend at the current rate, we will need £12,610 in the next year, plus more for food and small grants.

The project is run entirely by volunteers, so all donations are used to support destitute asylum seekers and not to fund running expenses. Our heartfelt thanks go out to everyone who has helped and who is helping by volunteering, fundraising and donating.

Chris Cann







**2441 FOOD PARCELS**

In the year to 31.05.07 the food group distributed over 2,440 food parcels and we supported over 100 different asylum seekers every month.

The numbers of asylum seekers using our group have slightly decreased over the year from 54 per week (average) at the beginning of the year to an average 47 per week at the end of the year.

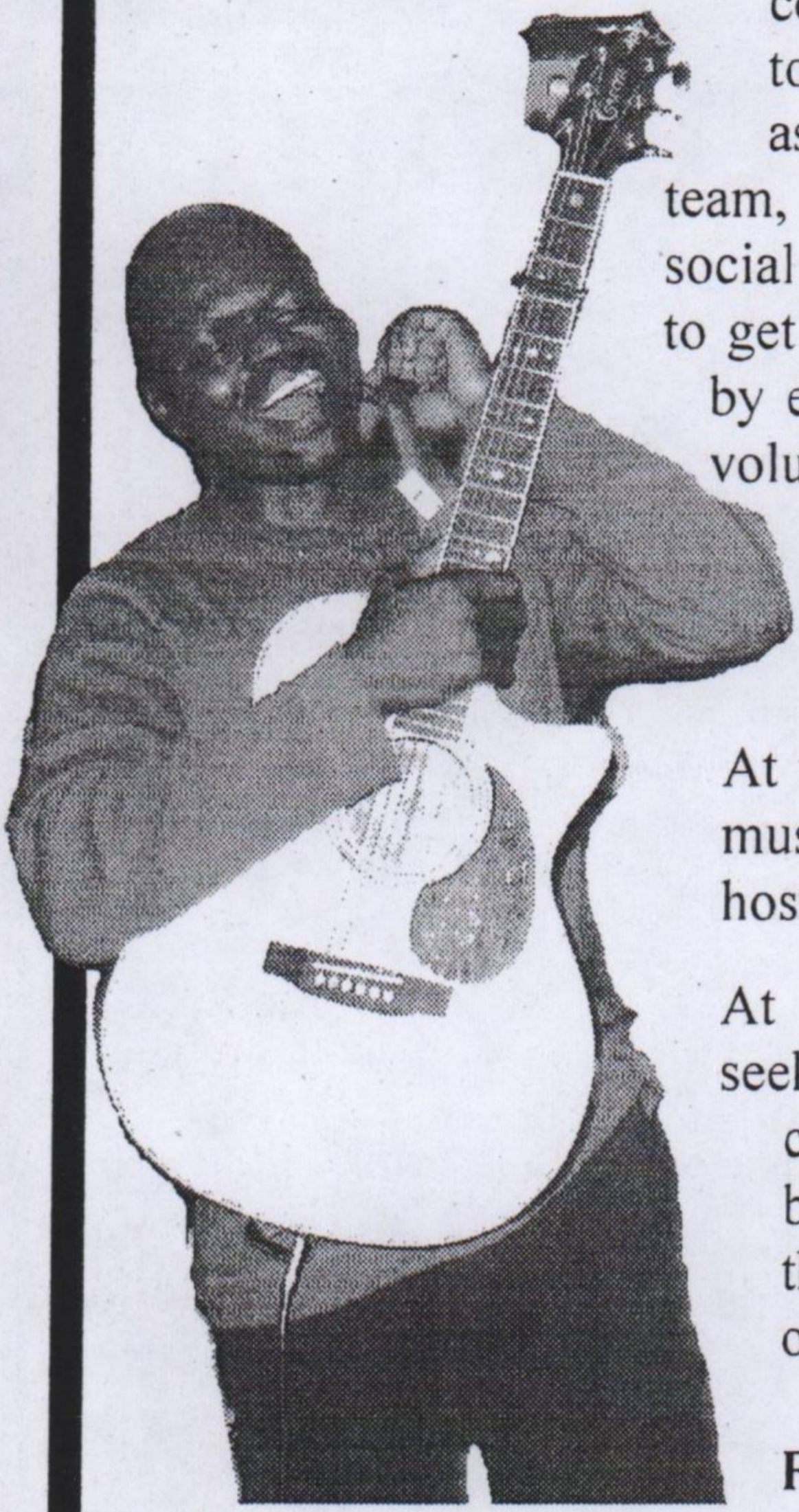
This year we've been able to slightly increase the amount of food we give out and thanks to the support of local green grocers Thompson Brothers we've been able to also increase the amount we give out of fruit and vegetables too.

The cost of the food distributed is currently about £200 per week

**Bill Walton**

**IF MUSIC BE THE FOOD OF LOVE, PLAY ON**

The Food Group has been at the Square Centre for nearly two years. We have given food to asylum seekers who have no recourse to public funds and are therefore destitute. They have to survive on £5 per week raised by the Forum. As well as giving food we have given destitute asylum seekers more



confidence, social opportunities and the chance to feel more fulfilled. Amongst other things, asylum seekers have formed their own football team, band and have helped to organise successful social events. We have encouraged asylum seekers to get actively involved in running the Food Group, by encouraging them to volunteer. A majority of volunteers are now asylum seekers.

Following the success of our band, we plan to organise monthly music workshops (see our appeal for musical instruments below).

At these workshops there can be an exchange of musical skills between asylum seekers and the host community.

At the Food Group, we do not want asylum seekers to be merely the passive recipients of charity. Instead, we have seen asylum seekers become happier, more fulfilled and confident as they have been given purpose, dignity and opportunity.

**Frank McMahon**

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 ★ **WANTED MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS** ★  
 ★ There are many asylum seekers who play musical instruments ★  
 ★ or are keen to learn to do so but do not have enough money to ★  
 ★ buy often expensive instruments. If you have a musical ★  
 ★ instrument that you ★  
 ★ no longer want or ★  
 ★ need please contact ★  
 ★ Frank on ★  
 ★ **07905 322813** ★  
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**FOOTBALL CRAZY**

Football is a sport which includes everyone whether you know how to play it or whether you have never played it. It is a sport for fun and also helps your physic. Here at the Refugee Forum Food Group, we began our

team in early March in order to build bridges and also to help us escape the tortures of everyday life as destitute asylum seekers. We got our volunteers and also the destitute asylum seekers coming on the Saturday for the food to volunteer and we had great response.

To our amazement football went really well and in our first game we had around 20 players. From that moment on we got to know each other better and built some trust with each other.

Unfortunately, we lost some of our determined players because since being destitute they have been moved and we don't have any contact details for them any more.

Our main aim was to build bridges

between communities and with us and we have achieved that successfully, we have seen a tremendous change in both the volunteers and also the asylum seekers as more and more have been willing to get involved with this project.

I would like to say that the football project has been really successful and also been fun because the players that we have, some of them are from a professional background which we didn't know about, and others are just committed beginners.

**Ravi**



## MOTHER

A face alongside my cot  
Had drawn the need of close surveillance  
That natural knack for raising a new-born  
was indisputable.

Crawling about happy or messy  
never meant getting hurt  
as the very face would stick over  
with a smile rather than a shout.

Caring and protective  
would sing a song for my sleeping.

Often, signals on it would wish me prestige,  
a beggar rather than a thief,  
a decent person.

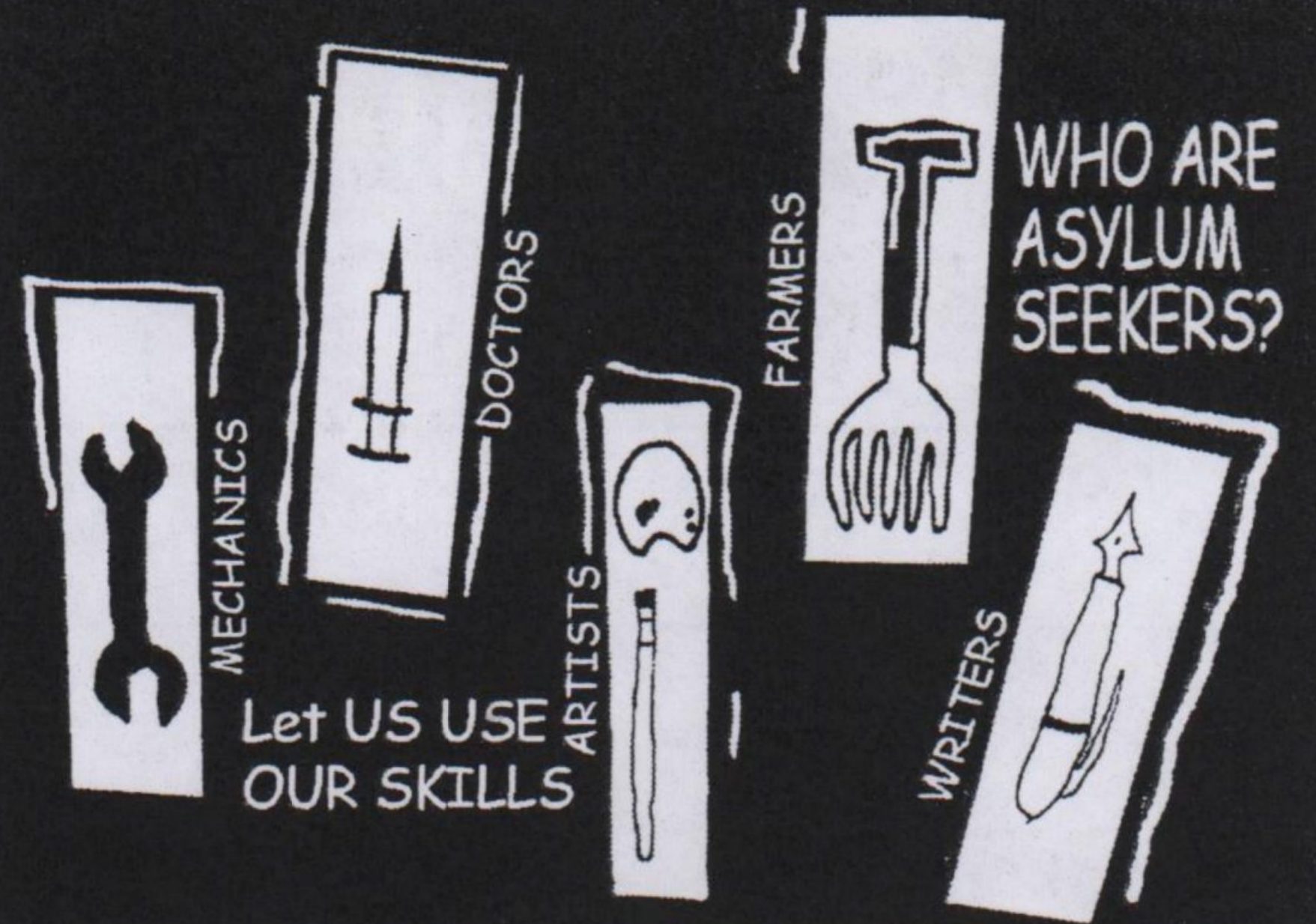
A sudden darkness split our joint living.

Indignation, sadness and tears...  
No longer the face I later learnt was a WOMEN's .. a MOTHERS.

Biological or not...the HANDS on nappies.

The irreplaceable knack.

A distinct presence we all should praise  
João Afonso



During the year the Destitution Group have helped several hundred refugees from over 30 countries including:-Afghanistan, Albania, Algeria, Angola, Burundi, Cameroon, China, Congo, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Gabon, Ghana, Guinea, India, Iran, Iraq, Ivory Coast, Israel, Kenya, Kosovo, Liberia, Malawi, Moldova, Mongolia, Nigeria, North Korea, Pakistan, Palestine, Romania, Russia, Serbia, Somali, South Africa, Sudan, Turkey, Uganda, Zimbabwe

## FOOD FOR THOUGHT

The West African poet and statesman Leoplold Senghor wrote in his book "Return To My Native Land" - "You can take the man out of the country but you cannot take the country out of the man." How right he was.

A weary traveller in the Sahara is sitting besides a roaring fire, a guest of this Tuareg family. He is invited to eat with them. They have few possessions. Years later I'm in Nottingham, sitting around the table in this flat near the Forum with a family, who are far from home. I'm invited to share their meal.

Fragrances of fresh coriander and eastern spices envelopes us, as we are momentarily transported to another

country, a soothing balm that dulls the heartache of separation and loss and broken dreams. What I have learned is that those who have nothing give you everything.

Arriving in our concrete cities many people try to reconnect with their land. Even a tub of herbs will do. Roots! Shoots! Life! As I leave I offer a pot of mint as a small token to Farida who immediately becomes animated; telling me what this means for her. I am moved to tears.

We all need nourishing life enhancing food from womb to tomb, not 'first world', profit-based solutions. Do the shareholders of Nestle ever witness the acute diarrhoea and possible death, suffered by many infants without access to clean drinking water? Or third world nursing mothers who are often faced with a stark choice—risk mixing powdered milk with contaminated water or offer their own milk with the real chance of HIV transmission. Spiked both ways. Food for thought, indeed.

Richard McCance

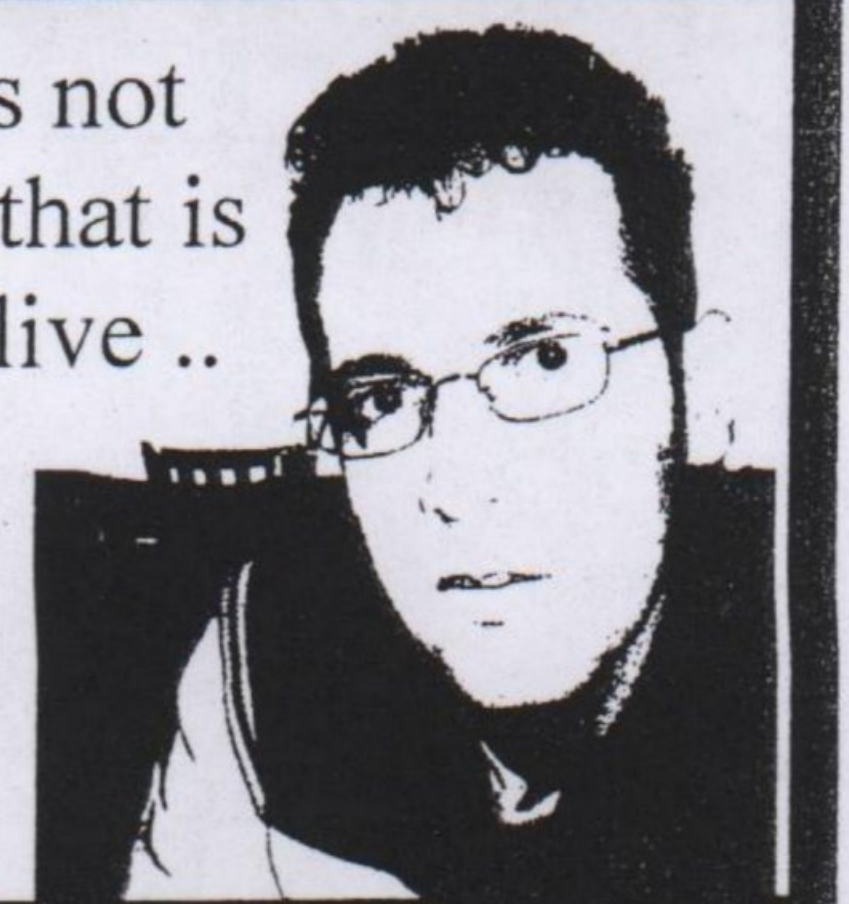
The Saturday Food Group provides a hot meal to between 30 and 40 asylum seekers every week. The food is cooked and prepared by volunteers from the asylum seeker and host communities

## THE RIGHT TO WORK

"this is a question always I ask my self (what will we do if you don't let us to live) and you don't give me right to live this is not good decision if you terminate my case and tell me you have to get out of this property and you

stop my support , if I say this is not right but you refuse me to OK that is a problems how to carry on to live .. its is a open letter to whom it may concern if you give us opportunity to work ....."

Azad





# STANDING ORDER MANDATE

Account holder(s)	
Address	
Bank sort code	
Account number	
To the manager of: Bank name	
Bank address	

**PAYMENT AUTHORITY:**

Please debit my/our account in accordance with the following details:

Please pay The Co-Operative Bank,  
PO Box 101, 1 Balloon Street, Manchester, M60 4EP  
Sort code 089299 / Account 65226311

Monthly amount	
Day of month for payment	£
Starting from	
Until further notice in writing, or	
Date of last payment	
Signed (account holder 1)	
Signed (account holder 2)	

Please complete and return to NNRF:

The Square Centre,  
389-394 Alfred Street North,  
Nottingham NG3 1AA