

## IF YOU WERE IN THEIR SHOES....

When asylum seekers first arrive in Wrexham, their initial needs are catered for by the Welsh Refugee Council, which covers the cost of their emergency accommodation. In about 9 days, or sometimes longer, they may be granted financial support from the National Asylum Support Service. They are then moved into NASS-funded accommodation till the result of their asylum application is decided.

Appeals may follow, but if they are granted leave to remain, or refugee status, they then have 28 days in which to find somewhere else to live, which they will then have to furnish. This is a daunting task, as they do not have savings and usually do not immediately receive benefit. Help is usually needed from charitable furniture depots and other sources.

Asylum seekers are not allowed to work before they are granted leave to remain, and while some attend English classes at college, there is a great need for ways to occupy the waiting time. They are often isolated, unable to communicate easily, usually living in one sparsely furnished room and having to cope with a good deal of hostility from certain sections of the population. At the same time most of them have experienced recent trauma under repressive regimes, and have had to leave relatives and everything familiar behind.

The initial emergency accommodation is important, and offers the chance to welcome and put at

ease people who have been through a very difficult time, and may have little or no English and no understanding of how things work here. Friendly support and help in finding their way around is essential and immensely appreciated.

The Welsh Refugee Council at Trinity House, Trinity St., deals with new arrivals, and offers advice and help with a range of problems, such as applying for help with transport to an asylum application hearing, inability to access NASS payments, filling in forms, accessing interpreters, referral to other agencies, etc. Ongoing advice and support is also provided once refugee status is attained.

We are currently very short of providers of emergency short-term accommodation, and hope that some of you will be kind enough to allow your names to be added to our list. You would be helping to provide a much-needed service and would have the opportunity to meet people from other cultural backgrounds. At present, most of our clients are from Iraq, Somalia, Afghanistan and Zimbabwe.

Please contact the Welsh Refugee Council on **01978 363240** between 9 am and 5 pm, if you are interested. £15 per night is paid for bed and breakfast, and £12.50 for bed only.

Margaret Clarke (volunteer worker at WRC)

If anyone has furniture they can donate to asylum seekers and refugees who have arrived with nothing, please contact Alison Smiga who is co-ordinating this - her number is **01978 762829**.

## WHEN DICTATORS GO SHOPPING...



(From www.whitehouse.org)