

# A safe space for young asylum seekers

X

By making grants we can support a wide range of work beyond our own programmes. After18 is one of several projects to benefit from a Relief Grant in 2016.

Ann Pfeiffer, Grants Programme Officer

Each year we support a number of projects that aim to make people's lives better through our Quaker Peace & Social Witness Relief Grants scheme. One of the projects we helped to fund this year was After18 – a Leicester-based charity that provides support for people aged 13 to 25 who are in the UK alone claiming asylum.

When a child arrives here fleeing war or persecution in their home country they cannot be returned to an unsafe place and so are allowed to stay in the UK. Once these children reach 18 they face many challenges – some may have to return to their country of origin while others will need to adapt to living in the UK more permanently. After18 provides information and one-to-one support to help them transition into adulthood and prepare for their future.

Many of the young people After18 works with are or were unaccompanied asylum-seeking children. Some of them are isolated because of disability, or because they have been moved to a new

city where they don't know anyone or speak the language. Some have experienced trauma and are afraid to mix with their own communities. This lack of contact and support can lead to mental health problems.

One of the ways in which After18 helps is by running weekly arts and crafts workshops – it was to help fund these that we made our original Relief Grant in 2015. As well as creating a social group for the young people, the workshops provide a safe space for them to express themselves and be heard. The activities keep them busy and distract them from their worries and bad experiences.

Young people from a variety of countries including Albania, Bangladesh, Eritrea, Iran, Kenya, Oman, Sri Lanka and Zimbabwe have taken part. Working together in a safe environment has enabled friendships to form and confidence to grow. Some of the group are even investigating the possibility of selling their craft products through a retail outlet in a nearby town.

## About Relief Grants

Relief Grants are given to projects for the alleviation of suffering as a result of war, conflict, natural disasters and climate change, but not for immediate crisis relief.

Up to £6,000 can be applied for by individual Quakers with the backing of at least one Quaker meeting. Application packs for 2017 grants are available between 1 October and 31 December 2016 at [www.quaker.org.uk/qpsw-grants](http://www.quaker.org.uk/qpsw-grants).

The workshops are based at Leicester Meeting House and St Martins House. This has helped to raise awareness of the difficulties faced by unaccompanied asylum-seeking children and young people amongst others who use these spaces. It has also enabled the young people to meet Quakers and members of the local community face to face. Young people from Leicester Local Quaker Meeting have regularly engaged with the group by baking cakes and participating in the workshops – a small but tasty step towards a creating a more welcoming society.

*We are able to support After18 thanks to applications made on their behalf by Leicester Quakers. If your meeting knows of a project that could benefit from a Relief Grant please do apply.*

Contact:

Ann Pfeiffer

[grants@quaker.org.uk](mailto:grants@quaker.org.uk)

020 7663 1053

[www.quaker.org.uk/grantmaking](http://www.quaker.org.uk/grantmaking)



Young people hold paintings they created during After18's 'Trails of Journeys' project, which was funded by a Quaker Relief Grant. Photo: Beate Dehnen