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The Archer

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A vital lifeline in a harsh world

For many years now, a humanitarian project has been operating quietly and efficiently in East Finchley, providing potentially life-saving relief to countless people who have fled their homelands. Archer photographer Mike Coles was given access to one session and here one of the project's volunteers describes what goes on.

On the first Sunday afternoon of every month a part of the High Road is transformed as hundreds of asylum seekers from all over London converge to attend the NNLS Destitute Asylum Seeker Drop-In.

The drop-in is a project of New North London Synagogue, a registered charity. The asylum seekers hail from more than 60 different countries. Most have fled war and conflict in

countries across Africa and the Middle East.

Despite the fact that many have escaped horrific persecution, including rape and torture, and have lost family members in the various conflicts we see featuring in the news headlines, they demonstrate extraordinary resilience and manage to laugh and joke despite their difficult circumstances.

Practical support

The drop-in is run entirely by volunteers, who provide a

range of services including food, clothes, children's activities, legal and medical signposting, £15 supermarket vouchers and £5 travel money. Apart from the rental of the building where the sessions are held, every penny raised goes directly to help the asylum seekers.

They are also supported with follow-up casework, such as

accompanying them to court cases or trying to secure accommodation for those who are street homeless. We work closely with another charity, Refugees At Home. If anyone would like to host one of the asylum seekers who attends the drop-in Refugees At Home would be delighted to hear from you. Go to www.refugeesathome.org.

Help them to overcome

A group of asylum seekers and refugees recently recorded an inspiring version of We Shall Overcome at the Phoenix Cinema in East Finchley. Please do watch the two-minute trailer on YouTube at www.youtube.com/watch?v=TCbACC-lskU.

It's linked to a donations page. Even better if you could make a donation to help provide supermarket vouchers and travel money for drop-in clients.

We have wonderful volunteers from East Finchley and



beyond supporting the asylum seekers at the drop-in, a real variety of generations, religions,

ethnic groups and cultures. To find out more, please email: dropin@nnls-masorti.org.uk.



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