

### **Asylum seekers update May 2023**

- 1. Conversation group** – This continues weekly at St Barts hall on Thursdays from 10-12
- 2. Walk in Greenwood Park** – 4 May, as the hall was used as a polling station
- 3. Picnic in Greenwood Park** – 29 May, organised by the Masorti Synagogue, with support from our group
- 4. Laptops and phones** – There is demand for both laptops and phones. Chris Blandford comes on Thursdays to advise. We have asked Herts Welcomes Refugees for this equipment.
- 5. Bikes and equipment** – We ask regularly for men's bikes, helmets, locks and lights
- 6. Bikeability training** - The last course was in January, and another is scheduled for 23 May.
- 7. Solicitors** – Not all asylum seekers have been able to find a solicitor to act for them. Immigration solicitors willing to act pro bono are rare. Asylum seekers without a solicitor are at a huge disadvantage when being interviewed by the Home Office.
- 8. College** – Many asylum seekers go to college to learn English and to learn other skills such as IT. Once they have been in the UK for a year they are allowed to study at college.
- 9. Food** – The residents claim that the food is inadequate and too spicy. Frozen food is provided by an outside caterer and microwaved on site.
- 10. Security** – There is now a fence around the hotel and security staff are reluctant to allow us into the hotel. Residents have to sign in and out.
- 11. Volunteering** – We are working with Communities 1<sup>st</sup> to arrange volunteering opportunities for the asylum seekers.
- 12. Music workshop** – The band Ooberfuse will come to our conversation group to help the asylum seekers to write and record their own songs about the emotional impact of being away from their homeland. Rosa Lewis from Caritas is helping to organise this workshop.