

Calais Light - UK Registered Charity No: 1206481

Calais Light a charity based in Essex and are currently seeking support in letting the parishioners in the Diocese of Chelmsford, specifically Colchester and Clacton know of our existence and enlist their support to find additional volunteers to fulfil our charitable objectives.

Calais Light is an active volunteer-run, fully registered charity on a mission to support refugees in Essex and Northern France with an overall aim to promote social inclusion & acceptance for refugees in the UK. Our work covers 3 distinct areas:

1. Weekend convoys of volunteers to Calais. Calais Light wants to change people's attitudes towards the plight of refugees as we know that it is hard to feel empathy for people you are afraid of. To counter this we run regular convoys from Brentwood to Calais and Dunkirk and volunteer with grassroots refugee charities there giving them temporary boosts of manpower to sort humanitarian aid and go into the field to deliver it and to care for refugees living without shelter. We partner with NGOs including Care4Calais, Calais Food Collective, Roots of Dunkirk, and Refugee Community Kitchen.

2. Our #Court Commerce initiative is a programme where we collaborate with popular brands to provide new clothes for refugees so assisting with social inclusion, helping them feel welcomed and valued. Our amazing helper brands have gifted us almost £500k worth of brand new, stylish clothing and toiletries. New clothes are important as we want to shift the perception of refugees and asylum seekers only deserving less than our best. By giving refugees in the UK ONE smart, well-fitting outfit helps them fit into our society, opening the conversation about their intrinsic worth as human beings.

3. Befriending and Teaching English. In February 2023 we launched our 1st Befriender hub in Clacton on Sea. There we have 3 teams of volunteers (travelling from Colchester) teaching English and practicing conversations and life skills to disabled refugees staying in a hostel there. We **urgently** seek more volunteers to widen the availability of English teaching and befriending support to as wide a group of refugees as possible in the area. These befriending hubs help equip refugees with the necessary skills for social inclusion – speaking and understanding English. This is essential to adjust to a new life in the UK. Being able to speak to your doctor, read signs or recognize and ask for food products whilst shopping is crucial to functioning well within a local community as is communicating with British people. Refugees come from many different countries and often cannot communicate with each other, let alone society at large. A sense of belonging and feeling accepted is vital for any human to thrive and we are all human.

Calais Light already has links with and sources volunteers from the Catholic Diocese of Brentwood and we want to broaden our reach and spread awareness to other Faith communities in Essex. We seek opportunities to speak with church groups in the Clacton area to publicise our charity and highlight our urgent need for volunteers using diocesan digital publications/ newsletters and recruit new volunteers.

The work of Calais Light is a tangible example reflecting the words of Bishop Guli when she said, *'I make no apology for our involvement in supporting people who are often deeply vulnerable and traumatised'* I would be grateful if you could advise how we can best reach your parishioners, particularly in Clacton but also in the wider Diocese of Chelmsford and collectively practice social inclusion, make refugees lives more bearable and demonstrate acceptance and welcome to refugees in Essex and beyond. Any opportunity to promote our request for volunteers would be fantastic.

Our website, www.calaislight.com, provides further information and I or our founder Mary Stretch are happy to answer any additional questions you may have.