



still human still here

The campaign to end destitution of refused asylum seekers

Action Week, 20-26 February 2012

Campaign Action 2

Live off £5 a day for a week

A single adult asylum seeker in the UK on 'Section 94' support currently receives £5.23 a day to live off.

A refused asylum seeker on 'Section 4' support gets the equivalent of just £5.05 a day. This is charged on a prepaid card which he can only be used at the following shops: ASDA, Sainsbury's, Tesco, Boots, Peacocks and Coop.

Do you think that you could live like this?

This year STAR is challenging you and your friends to live on the daily allowance given to asylum seekers, to prove just how impossible this can be...

The Action:

It sounds simple. All you need to do is to live off **£36.62 a week**, not including rent. Once you break down your weekly expenses you will find this is much harder than you thought. It has been found that the average student in the UK spends just over £100 a week excluding rent, the main expenses being alcohol, and groceries.

Many asylum seekers are very isolated. They cannot ask someone to lend them a fiver to tide them over, use up some tins of food their parents brought on the last visit, or pop over to a mate's house for snack and a quick drink.

Preparations Beforehand:

- ★ **Get others involved!** To make the campaign action more effective it needs to be undertaken by as many people as possible.
- ★ **Talk to people around you.** Chances are some of your friends, family, work colleagues, flatmates or even professors would be interested in joining in.
- ★ Advertise the action in the **student paper**. This will attract a wider range of people who may not otherwise have heard of the event.
- ★ Put up **posters** around the university. Remember to keep them short and sweet, include only the main facts about the campaign and a link to your website or facebook page.
- ★ Think about contacting your **local MP**, and ask if s/he would be prepared to live off £35 a week. Even if s/he just did it for a day it would show him/her how this allowance is simply not enough to live on. Alternatively you could contact local celebrities and influential people to see if they would be interested, and if they are unable to do so they could help publicize the action and lend their name to the cause. Make sure you get in touch with STAR national before you do this!

Case study: STAR Volunteer

Approximate weekly expenses (minus rent):

Transport	£13.10
Food shopping	£20.00
Eating/going out	£25.00
Clothes	£8.00
Toiletries	£5.00
Library fines	£2.00
Books	£10.00
Phone Bill	£5.00
Total	£78.10

Plan

It is important to plan the event in advance to make sure that every one knows what they are doing, and to know how many people are going to be taking part. It is also very important to make notes of what is said during meetings so you can look back and see what has been decided.

- ★ Discuss whether you are going to focus solely on this campaign action or whether you wish to **combine** it with others, such as the STAR Action Week 2012 quiz, or a sleepout.
- ★ Keep people updated on **social media** websites such as Facebook or twitter, and give a countdown to the start of the action. Even though not everyone will be taking part in this action, they may be interested in learning more about the issue and how Action Week is unfolding...
- ★ The week before, **keep a diary** of your spending on an average week so that you can compare with Action Week and see just how much a difference this will make in your lifestyle
- ★ During the planning stage it should be decided whether the campaign action is going to be a **fundraiser** for STAR or not.
- ★ Give your campaign action a **competitive edge** e.g. ask the football team and the netball team to take part and see how many students complete the challenge on each side. Student papers love reporting on this kind of thing!
- ★ Lay down some **basic rules**, e.g. how much of your existing stock will you be able to rely on? e.g. tins of food, cosmetics, toiletries...Remember you should be able to get buy on what you can buy in a week. Don't expect your friends to miss lectures because they can't afford the bus fair!

During the Action

It is essential to keep people updated and aware of the action whilst it is going on.

- ★ Try **blogging** or video blogging about your experiences. A daily post on twitter or Facebook will enhance solidarity with other people taking part in the campaign action and inform your friends of the challenges of living on £5 a day.
- ★ Keep a **diary** and compare it with the one written the week before Action Week. Make sure you keep a note of things you use which have not come out of your daily allowance.
- ★ **Set up a stall** at a strategic point on campus (e.g. outside the Students' Union or the library), to inform fellow students, collect responses for the quiz, and provide resources on the campaign.
- ★ Have **posters** dotted around campus drawing attention to your stall. The more people informed the more misconceptions dispelled!
- ★ Take lots of **photos!** Of the stall, of your weekly shop, of whatever you think may be beneficial in relating your experience...
- ★ Have **other events** around the main campaign action, i.e. film screenings, guest speakers, a music night at the Student Bar, or even a pub quiz. By varying the activities this will increase the potential number of students joining in.

After the Action

- ★ Have a follow up article in the **student newspaper**. This can highlight the struggle of living off £35 a week, the public's reaction to the campaign, and support you may have gained.
- ★ Be **creative!** Edit a video of your experiences, make a collage of the packaging you've used that week, or pool the experiences of STAR members and write a 'mini report' on the findings of your action. Upload this onto the Action Week 2012 facebook page to allow different STAR groups and members of the public to see all your hard work!
- ★ **Tell STAR national** how it went!
- ★ Meet with your **MP** to discuss your experiences. Don't forget that you must register for the STAR training, Lobbying your MP; Influencing Change' in order to do this as part of STAR.