LETTER FROM OUR MANAGER

Since 2020, we have worked hard to establish new projects to respond to the constantly changing and worsening situations refugees and asylum seekers are facing. Over the last year we have been working hard to reapply for funding in order to keep these initiatives available to the community we support. This is not an easy task, as it can be very hard to secure funding to extend a project's lifespan however we are proud to announce a number of successes that we will detail throughout this annual report. We have also been able to launch new projects and build new partnerships with established charities who are expanding into the North West.

We have also been addressing how much our charity has grown over the last few years and the new opportunities and pressures that brings. In response, we have moved from a registered charity status to a charitable incorporated organisation (CIO) in order that we can invest in assets such as accommodation to house refugees, and protect our trustees. We have also been exploring how we can better support our staff, with some of our staff members initiating mental health support and awareness sessions, for staff and volunteers, in order to help with issues of vicarious trauma and burnout.

After the disruption of the pandemic to our services, we have been trialling different ways to deliver support to our expanding client group. This has included trialling an appointment system where people can book online to meet with an advisor and rearranging when we run our drop in sessions. We are still in the process of exploring the best solutions for clients and staff and we appreciate the patience of our clients whilst we settle on the best structure moving forward.

Thank you for taking the time to read our latest annual report for 2022-2023 and thank you for your continued support, as we step into the next year.



In Peace
Belay Kahsay
Manager of MRSN

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OUR AIMS

SUPPORT

To support refugees to access services and opportunities on an equal basis, in order to prevent all forms of poverty and allow individuals to fulfil their potential.

EDUCATE

To educate refugees and asylum seekers on their rights and responsibilities as active citizens, and contribute to positive media representation of refugees.

EMPOWER

To empower refugees to establish strong community organisations and provide platforms for them to represent the needs and aspirations of their communities.



OUR OBJECTIVES

1. To advance education and relieve financial hardship amongst those seeking asylum and those granted refugee status particularly by the provision of legal and other advice.
2. To support and promote the physical and mental health of asylum seekers, refugees and their dependents.
3. To advance the education and training of those granted refugee status and their dependents in need thereof so as to advance them in life and assist them to adapt within a new community.
4. To advance the education and knowledge of the public in general about the issues relating to refugees and those seeking asylum.
5. The provision of facilities for recreation or other leisure time occupation with the object of improving the conditions of life of those persons who have need of such facilities by reason of their age. race, gender, religion, infirmity or disablement, financial hardship or social and economic circumstances

GENERAL AND IMMIGRATION ADVICE

After years of providing advice solely through a drop in system, from May 2022 we began trialing our online appointment system. This has come up against challenges but in many ways has proven successful. It meant we could manage client expectations and secure allocated appointment slots. It has also helped staff wellbeing as they know in advance what cases they will be handling. Clients have struggled at times with the booking system, as when it is fully booked for the coming 2 weeks it displays as no appointments available and we fill up incredibly quickly due to the number of people wanting an appointment. We are looking into how we can improve this system to reduce this frustration.

For 6 months we ran an advice session in Stockport in order to make our advice more accessible relative to location. After it closing, in its place we have begun running citizenship appointments, after discovered that we are the only centre in Manchester providing support with citizenship applications.

We have had the pleasure of welcoming Charlotte to our welfare advice team for 2.5 days a week as a welfare advisor. We also cannot forget the many volunteers we have supporting this project. Our team includes incredibly skilled previous service users and people trained with the Manchester Volunteer Advice Partnership. We have recently begun exploring corporate volunteering with companies such as Barclays and JMW Solicitors LLP.

1151 INDIVIDUAL CLIENTS WERE SUPPORTED

968 APPOINTMENTS WERE ATTENDED

1121 DROP IN SESSIONS ATTENDED



> I've been volunteering here for about a year now and this place always fills me up with warmth. I feel like I make a difference everytime I help a refugee/asylum seeker with a problem. It's been a pleasure.
>
> **ZAHABIYA, VOLUNTEER**





175 APPLICATIONS FOR CITIZENSHIP

72 FIRST UNIVERSAL CREDIT ACCOUNTS OPENED

45 INDEFINITE LEAVE TO REMAIN APPLICATIONS

70 MANCHESTER MOVE APPLICATIONS (SOCIAL HOUSING)

291 APPLICATIONS FOR TRAVEL DOCUMENT

REFUGEE INTEGRATION SERVICE

Our Refugee Integration Service has gone through some big changes over the last year. Back in April our team of 3 RIS Case workers noticed that they were beginning to see more people with complex needs. In August they successfully secured funding from Manchester City Council to continue their project, and with that begin a partnership in order to work together across agencies to support more complex needs.

Within RIS we will be supporting more low level needs through our drop in sessions and referring to alternative services when we cannot support. We hope this multi agency approach reduces the pressure on staff to have to support with all issues, and that these established referral pathways prevent people from falling through the cracks.

In January, our RIS Case Worker Sophie began the Housing Access Support Scheme (HASS). This is to support people who have been granted refugee status in the last 9 months and have one of the vulnerable needs as listed below, with applying for housing. The purpose of HASS is to teach people about access to accommodation in the UK and equip them with the tools to find homes on their own. It has been incredibly rewarding to see people attending house viewings and coming to sessions to use laptops to find places to live.

WHO RIS AND HASS SUPPORTS:

- people who have recieved refugee status in the last 9 months.
- people with learning difficulties
- people with mental or physical disabilities
- people who are pensionable age

171 CASES OPENED IN THE LAST YEAR

116 INDIVIDUAL CLIENTS SEEN



OUR DROP IN SESSIONS ARE AT THE FOLLOWING TIMES:

- RIS Tuesdays and Thursday afternoon drop in sessions are at St James Church, M14 4TH 1:30 – 4:00pm
- Home Search Club drop In session Thursday afternoons also at St James Church, M14 4TH 1:30 – 4:00pm



84 CLIENTS HELPED WITH HOUSING ISSUES

14 CLIENTS HELPED WITH BANKING, UNIVERSAL CREDIT AND EMPLOYMENT

11 PEOPLE SUPPORTED WITH BILLS, TAXES AND DVLA APPLICATIONS

SHARED ROUTES PROJECT

The Shared Routes Project funding was set to run out on December of 2022, so this past year has been a big year for reapplying for funding and putting together an impact report of our work to date. Through this impact report as compiled by Sarah Forster, we can see 96% of individuals who take the course report improved skills development and improved understanding of UK agencies and communities. We can also see the jobs that Peer Navigators have gone on to do include office administrator, taxi driver, social care assistant or restaurant staff, or they have gone on to study interpreting, functional skills, mental health, psychotherapy, Maths, English or business management.

We are proud to announce we have secured funding to continue our project for another 3 years. This means we can continue to provide people with access to training and support getting into volunteering. We can also build on to our teams successes and continue to keep in contact with previous peer navigators, as our peer navigators experiences play a key role in shaping our programme for future individuals.

90 **PEER NAVIGATORS APPLIED OR WERE REFERRED TO COMPLETE THE TRAINING**





In addition to this we also relocated our office from Salford, to 113 Princess Road, which has meant we are closer to the rest of the MRSN team. We have also been going into hotels in order to raise awareness of our course, and provide opportunities for individuals to build skills whilst they are waiting for outcomes of their asylum applications.

96% **PEER NAVIGATORS REPORTED IMPROVED SKILLS DEVELOPMENT**

96% **PEER NAVIGATORS REPORTED IMPROVED KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF UK AGENCIES**

For the full impact report see: bit.ly/srpimpact

> "The feedback I have received from people who have done the programme has been amazing. It has a positive impact on the mental health and wellbeing of refugees and asylum seekers. It contributes to enhancing people's confidence levels and self-esteem. It gives people knowledge and skills so they can have better life chances and an improved quality of life."

ESOL COORDINATOR, TAMESIDE MBC

EXPERT BY EXPERIENCE

The EbE group is composed of 12 members and they have agreed to meet twice a month, with one activity benefiting their own skills development and needs, and the other inputting into the Step Change programme.

Between May and October 2022, the group took part in several training sessions including Public Speaking, Facilitation, Campaigning skills, Emotional Intelligence, Media, Mental Health First Aid, and Parliamentary training.

> "The Public Speaking training has enabled me to feel more confident when I speak in front of people."

> "It was useful to know how the parliament works in this country."







Current areas of focus identified by the EbE group are through the Campaigns work with Asylum Matters, the employability working group with Refugee and Mentors, as well as setting up the digital inclusion work stream with Revive and Rainbow Haven.

The group has also been involved in the GM Offer work where EbE members took part in interviews with Refugee Action regarding the User Research for the Step-Change GM Offer. As per feedback of one member, the interview was about their experience as an asylum seeker and what they could suggest to others.

> **“I felt confident when sharing my story to help others in the same situation.”**

In November, the group travelled to London to take part in “the Lift The Ban Rally” organised by Asylum Matter to support the campaign and introduce the “Street Challenge Lift the Ban Strategy”. In December, the group Had its reflection meeting to discuss about successes and challenges, and to plan the work for 2023 with an emphasis on the group visibility.

ASYLUM GUIDE PROJECT

The Asylum Guide project has been in operation in partnership with Refugee Action since 2020 and aims to work with asylum seekers going through the asylum process, to help them understand it better. There have been significant hold ups from the Home Office in processing asylum applications which means that people are waiting years for an outcome to their asylum application. Due to the huge number of asylum seekers being unprocessed and housed in hotels, we have been very busy running drop in advice sessions within the hotels. This is becoming an increasingly unmanageable situation and our staff have been trying to collaborate with STEP change partners in order to get a more coordinated response. Some hotels do not seem to have the basic support in place which has put more pressure on us to fill this gap.

The Home Office have introduced 'fast track asylum questionnaires' to try and speed up the process for certain nationalities, which will go some way to clearing the backlog, and will hopefully result in a positive decision for clients, as long as they return the questionnaire in time with the help of a solicitor. We have been working with GMIAU and Duncan Lewis to ensure that those without a solicitor can still receive legal advice on completing them.





114 **ASYLUM SEEKERS STARTED RECIEVING SUPPORT OVER THE LAST YEAR**

6 **PEOPLE GRANTED REFUGEE STATUS WITHIN THE LAST YEAR**

45 **PEOPLE SUPPORTED IN THE LAST YEAR LIVING IN HOTELS**

45 **PEOPLE REFERRED FOR ADDITIONAL SUPPORT**

> This is an incredibly anxious and distressing time for our clients to be waiting so long for updates on their process, and has been difficult on our staff and volunteers. However, we continue to work with a wonderful team of volunteers who are able to speak to clients in their own language and take the time to support them through these difficult times. We are expanding our work into the hotels into the coming year.

HOTEL OUTREACH

Our work in hotels not only just provides drop in advice sessions, but we also attend hotels weekly to provide activities and resources to people living there. This includes ESOL lessons and in April of 2022 we ran an event where we gave out clothes and food to people. We set this up to be a dignified experience where people could browse clothes and take time to try things on.

We also have run the Ramadan cooking project where we partnered with organisations across Manchester to provide meals to people in hotels for Ramadan, and in December we had enough funding in order to put together some food parcels along with hot food, and deliver them.

We have been trying to meet with other organisations to raise awareness of the poor conditions people are living in the hotels, however we have not seen much progress in terms of change. We work closely with the staff and SERCO in these hotels to try and ensure people's needs are being met.

We are excited to welcome back our colleague Jennifer Anderson to coordinate work within the hotels. Jennifer previously ran our Destitute project, and has been helping with work in the hotels since January 2023. She has taken on a team of volunteers to provide smaller ESOL teaching groups, and volunteers to provide play and learning sessions with children, every week.

40

WOMEN ATTEND OUR ENGLISH LESSONS EACH WEEK







EID PARTY IN PARTNERSHIP WITH CITY OF SANCTUARY

100+

RESIDENTS ATTENTED OUR EID PARTY AT THE HOTEL

"On Saturday the 22nd April, we partnered with City of Sanctuary to celebrate Eid with the residents of one of the hotels we work in. Liz Hibberd and her team from city of Sanctuary charity, MRSN and other groups with their volunteers gave their support to an amazing day of activities like football henna face and hand painting, Circus acts, and a giant Bouncy castle. There were tables of cakes and juices and the children left at the end of the day with many amazing gifts donated from various sources. The whole event was buzzing with laughter and much happiness, it really lit up the Hotel atmosphere."

JENNIFER ANDERSON, ASYLUM HOTEL COORDINATOR

HEALTH AND WELLBEING

Refugee Health and Wellbeing provide Health and wellbeing support to refugees and asylum seekers. MRSN offers a range of services and support to enable people to lead healthy and fulfilling lives.
As well as physical exercise and football sessions, the project give one-to-one support and organizes healthy living workshops. Support is also provided around issues such as access to health and mental health care, volunteering, or joining support groups

The project is helping around 120 refugees and asylum seekers every week to lead healthy and fulfilling lives and improve their wellbeing and health.





REFUGEE WEEK 2022

Over the week of June 20th – June 26th, charities across the UK were taking time to celebrate Refugee Week, whilst focusing on the theme of Healing. To celebrate it ourselves, we ran our annual and favourite tradition of the Refugee World Cup. Teams came from across Greater Manchester to compete and it was a spectacular and thoroughly enjoyable event for all involved.

We plan to continue our tradition in 2023 with another Refugee World Cup. Please check our website and social media for updates on this.

120

REFUGEES SUPPORTED EACH WEEK



OUR FUNDERS

- Access To Justice Foundation
- Barrow Cadbury Trust
- BBC Children In Need
- BBC Children In Need COVID
- Big Lottery
- Cadbury/Lottery
- Crisis Covid
- Comic Relief
- Destitution Fund
- Forever Manchester
- GMCVO
- Greater Manchester Mayor's Charity
- Groundwork
- Joseph Levy Foundation
- Lloyds
- Lottery Community Fund
- MACC
- Manchester City Council VCS
- MIND
- National Lottery Community Fund
- RAFT
- Refugee Action
- The Tudor Trust
- UK Community Foundations
- WEA

OUR PARTNERS

- 5 Star Catering Equipment
- Ahmed Bros
- Asylum Matters
- Atiha Chaudry
- Boaz Trust
- British Red Cross
- Care4Calais
- Caritas
- Chorlton Refugee Aid
- Citizen’s Advice Bureau
- City of Sanctuary
- Cornerstones
- Cracking Good Food
- El-Ammar Bakery
- Emerge/touchwood
- ESOL Manchester
- Farshare
- Flow Max Group
- Freedom From Torture
- Gatley Tandoori
- Greater Manchester Immigration Aid Unit
- Growing together Levenshulme
- Khandoker Restaurant
- Magic4smiles
- Manchester BME Network
- Manchester City Council
- Manchester Metropolitan University.
- Maz Linford
- Migrant Help
- Nathan Dale Gardners
- Nazarene Theological College
- NIA Centre
- One Manchester
- Precision Dentist Clinic
- PRIDES
- Princess Butcher
- Projekts
- Rainbow Haven
- Refugee Action
- Refugees at Home
- Revive
- Salvation Army
- SASCA
- Save the Children
- Shelter
- St James Church, Moss side
- The Little Sri Lankan
- The Mustard Tree
- Unicorn Grocery
- Vegware
- Women’s Aid



FINANCIAL REVIEW

INCOME: £484,138.00

2021-2022: £462,208.00

GIFTS AND DONATIONS: 3.4%
CHARITABLE INCOME: 96.2%
OTHER INCOME: 0.4%

EXPENDITURE: £432,997.00

2021-2022: £461,462.00

FUNDRAISING AND GOVERNANCE: 4.4%
CHARITABLE ACTIVITIES: 64.8%
SUPPORT COSTS: 30.8%

NET INCOME: £51,141.00
TOTAL FUNDS AT START OF YEAR: £277,423.00
TOTAL FUNDS AT END OF YEAR: £328,564.00