LETTER FROM OUR MANAGER

Welcome to our annual report 2023-24. It has been a busy time at MRSN as we all continually work to improve our services for refugees and people seeking asylum. I am writing this following the mass counter-demonstrations resulting from extremist riots that faced many areas of the country. It was heart-warming to receive good wishes and support from individuals and organisations who recognise the difficult work carried out by MRSN, and other fellow organisations. Over the past 3 months we have been working to review and set out our future direction. Supported by Lloyd's business consultant, MRSN staff, trustees and clients were reminded of the importance of revisiting our aims and objectives. MRSN is a local registered charity with a clear vision –We want to help build a society in which refugees are welcome, respected and safe and be a place where they can achieve their full potential. Established in 1995 by local people, we work to support individuals and build strong refugee community organisations that contribute to the life of our city.

Manchester has always been a place for people fleeing from persecution and extreme hardship in their homeland. Our clients often experience major challenges and trauma on their journey here. Once here they face an increasingly complex and inefficient legal system and often struggle to get even basic support and help. The past few years has seen the deliberate fostering of a hostile environment based on misinformation and prejudice. All indications are that migration will continue and the city will continue to need a dedicated agency supporting people seeking asylum and helping refugees settle and play a full part in their new community.

MRSN are proud to be a central organisation that contributes to that vital support. We offer our thanks to all those that choose to fund and support our charitable work. I hope you enjoy reading about our development and successes 2023-2024 and our plans for the future.



In Peace
Belay Kahsay
CEO of MRSN

OUR CONTENTS

OUR AIMS	4
OUR OBJECTIVES	5
GENERAL REFUGEE ADVICE	6
IMMIGRATION ADVICE	8
SHARED ROUTES PROJECT	10
EXPERT BY EXPERIENCE	12
ASYLUM SUPPORT PROJECT	14
HOTEL PROJECT	16
REFUGEE INTEGRATION SERVICE	18
HEALTH AND WELLBEING	20
OUR FUNDERS	22
OUR PARTNERS	23
FINANCIAL REVIEW	24

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.
6. To relieve the effects of financial poverty on refugees and asylum seekers through the provision of temporary accommodation.

GENERAL REFUGEE ADVICE

Over the last year, Charlotte has taken over the coordination of General Refugee Advice, and Birhanemeskel was recruited as Refugee Advice Worker. They have continued to provide high quality support through their drop ins and appointments.

This project continues to be phenomenally supported by our fantastic volunteers and Charlotte has been expanding the training provided to volunteers.



> I am very satisfied with what you have done for me! Many people's lives have changed with your help. Thank you very much for what you have done!

FEEDBACK FROM OUR CLIENTS THIS YEAR

751 INDIVIDUAL CLIENTS WERE SUPPORTED

1182 CASES WERE OPENED

34
CASES OPENED RELATING TO ACCESS TO EDUCATION

83
CASES OF SUPPORT WITH UNIVERSAL CREDIT

17
CASES TO SUPPORT ACCESS TO EMPLOYMENT AND VOLUNTEERING

299
CASES TO SUPPORT WITH ACCESS TO HOUSING (EXCLUDING MANCHESTER MOVE)

148
CASES TO SUPPORT WITH ACCESS TO HEALTHCARE

147
CASES OF OPENING MANCHESTER MOVE APPLICATIONS

IMMIGRATION ADVICE

This year Alex, Bridget and Kira have been managing the project alongside a great team of volunteers. The team have been continuing to work hard to expand their own immigration expertise in order that we can provide more support to clients. We would also like to congratulate Kira, who not only moved into a role with MRSN in the last year, but passed the OISC Level 1 immigration/asylum.



797 INDIVIDUAL CLIENTS WERE SUPPORTED

1054 CASES WERE OPENED

13
INDEFINITE LEAVE TO REMAIN APPLICATIONS

220
CASES TO SUPPORT WITH CITIZENSHIP APPLICATIONS

389
CASES TO SUPPORT WITH TRAVEL DOCUMENTS

99
CASES TO PROVIDE SUPPORT FOR ASYLUM SEEKERS

> The staff's patience and calmness in responding to the refugees was far beyond my imagination.

> Very good service and wonderful and helpful people are working hard to help us to get our rights.

FEEDBACK FROM OUR CLIENTS THIS YEAR



13
VOLUNTEERS SUPPORTED THE PROJECT THIS YEAR

SHARED ROUTES PROJECT

The Shared Routes Project has continued to build upon its reputation of high quality training and support. Over the last year, the team have provided 4 courses, and built even more pathways to accessing volunteer opportunities, including placing people within internal volunteer roles within other projects in MRSN.



77 PEER NAVIGATORS COMPLETED THE TRAINING THIS YEAR

58 PEER NAVIGATORS PLACED IN VOLUNTEERING OPPORTUNITIES

80% PEER NAVIGATORS REPORTED INCREASED CONFIDENCE FOLLOWING TRAINING.

85% PEER NAVIGATORS REPORTED MAKING FRIENDS ON THE COURSE.



100% PEER NAVIGATORS REPORTED IMPROVED SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

100% PEER NAVIGATORS REPORTED IMPROVED KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF UK AGENCIES

> I enjoyed the training very much and I can now volunteer in the field that I love because when I started thinking about it I didn't know how to get into the sustainability field. I want to thank you and all the team for this amazing opportunity for me.

QUOTE FROM PEER NAVIGATOR

> I've managed to register at local Bolton CVS who help me to find a volunteer job during the Shared Routes Project course. I felt very confident during the interview as I learnt job interview skills through the Shared Routes course. Also the course trainers are very kind and professional and I used them as a job reference. Thank you MRSN for all ongoing help and support.

QUOTE FROM PEER NAVIGATOR

EXPERT BY EXPERIENCE

In the year 2023-2024, the group has been busy engaging with many other external partners including The Woolf Institute in Cambridge in the launch of their report on Refugees Integration, we have worked with the RSMP (Regional Strategic Migration Partnership) in Manchester to provide Lived Experience input for building their website, we have also worked with the GMCA (Greater Manchester Combines Authority).





4 EbE group members took part in the Communities Not Camps event and workshop campaign hosted by Home in Manchester in collaboration with Refugee Action and Asylum Matters.

5 EbE members have also been involved in discussions with Manchester City Council in their process to become a council of Sanctuary; we are proud to be invited among other organisations that support refugees and people seeking in the region to take part in the Manchester City Council stakeholder event for further discussion around MCC to become a council of sanctuary.

3 EbE group members have worked in collaboration with the developer CAST and the funder DISRUPT to co-design the Greater Manchester referral platform -Kompasi- which was finally live in May this year 2024 and the EbE group is proud to have been involved in the design process from start to completion.

The EbE is going from strength to strength and we are very proud to say that we are Great!

ASYLUM SUPPORT PROJECT

After the closure of the Asylum Guide project, in partnership with Refugee Action, the now named Asylum Support Project reopened in September 2023 when our long time coordinator Bridget came back to work.

SINCE SEPTEMBER WE HAVE:

331 NEW CLIENTS WERE SUPPORTED WITH CASEWORK

12 UNDERAGE ASYLUM SEEKERS WERE HELPED AFTER BEING INCORRECTLY AGED BY THE HOME OFFICE

30 ASYLUM SEEKERS WERE SUPPORTED TO LODGE AN APPEAL

We have helped roughly 30 asylum seekers lodge an appeal, who have been unrepresented at the appeal stage, to have a second chance to argue their case. Unfortunately access to legal aid solicitors is very limited at the moment, but we have had some success in referring these clients on to IAS, UKIL and Bately Law solicitors so they dont go to the appeal hearing unrepresented.



CASE STUDY OF SUPPORTING A HOMELESS FAMILY

> The following case is a great example of the integral role support organisations play. The asylum system is complicated and even amongst organisations like the council and the Home Office it isn't always clear where responsibility lies.

We had a family come into the drop-in who had been sporadically homeless over 2 years and wanted help requesting emergency accommodation. After speaking with Migrant Help, it was discovered that their asylum case had been withdrawn. This meant the Home Office had no duty to house them. As the family had 3 young children, all under 10, the council would have a duty to house the family under section 17 of the children's act. We helped them call the council who said they would call the family back soon about housing.

Later that week at the immigration drop-in, I discovered the council had instructed them to go to the police but they hadn't done so as they'd tried that previously and found it to be unhelpful. Therefore, together we called the council and they initially said their case had been closed as they hadn't followed previous instructions. After some back and forth, they agreed to reopen the case and refer them to children's services and the NRPF team.

The NRPF team contacted us and said it wasn't their area but they would try and help anyway. Children's services contacted us and said they could house them until Monday when their appeal could be accepted and the Home Office would then house them. After explaining the situation to the Home Office, I was told the staff member there would have to speak to their manager and get back to me.

I managed to arrange NRPF team to house the family in a hotel until Monday with the hopes we would've heard back from the Home Office by then. They told me to contact children's services and arrange a one-off £50 payment to assist them in the meantime.

By Monday I still hadn't received a response from the Home Office so I made an appointment for them at further submissions unit in Liverpool for the Friday of that week, as an alternative way to reopen their asylum claim. The NRPF team agreed to house them until the following Monday. I also arranged a food parcel for them to collect on during the week.

The following Friday the client attended his further submissions appointment and I was then able to take steps to get them housing. After discussions with ACM and the NRPF team about whether the case is relevant to schedule 10, section 17, section 98 or section 95, we decided to apply for emergency housing through the Home Office. We also had to chase up the council and police for letters stating the steps taken on the family's part and why the support could not be provided, as evidence that they were eligible for alternative support. By Tuesday the family are were being housed by the Home Office.

Later that month, I was contacted by the client as his section 95 support application had been rejected without the right to appeal. I contacted ACM again to discuss and they said they would assist him in appealing on the grounds his asylum claim was withdrawn previously without following Home Office guidance. They were successful and the client and his family have continued to be supported by the Home Office and we hope they now will have a stable living situation.

HOTEL PROJECT

Jennifer started as an Asylum Hotel Coordinator in April 2023 providing ESOL and wellbeing support to the adults and playful activities for the young children within 1 hotel in Manchester. We then expanded to support two further hotels housing men.

18 VOLUNTEERS SUPPORT THE ESOL PROJECT EVERY WEEK

15 VOLUNTEERS PROVIDE ACTIVITIES FOR CHILDREN

UPTO **25** ATTENDEES AT EACH ESOL CLASS

UPTO **80** CHILDREN ATTENDED PARTY EVENTS



ABOUT OUR ACTIVITIES

ESOL

For 2 hours every week we provide ESOL for adult females. We have two qualified teachers offering their support to the needs of the captive audience. The teaching materials used were very well sourced from established and trusted ESOL providers online for us to explore and obtain to suit the needs of the recipients. The ESOL classes at both the male only hotels were similar in execution but tweaked to meet varied levels of understanding.









EVENTS

We put on many events for the occupants of the hotels some of them included fun days with bouncy castles, magicians, circus acts and food and exciting cakes. We organised Christmas parties for the ESOL classes and gave gifts to everyone who attended. We took the ESOL groups for coffee and cakes. There were many occasions for joyful conversations to alleviate anxiety, isolation and depression.

CHILDREN

Every week we set up at the hotel for activities with the children and this included, board games for the teenagers, reading materials, jigsaw puzzles, crafts, games with small prizes and some fun games including football which we were supported by Street League who came each week and took those who wanted to take part outside to have a kick around.

ARTS AND CRAFTS

This was supported by 3 ladies from Refugee Aid who came fortnightly to encourage the women to join in learning to knit and crotchet and do embroidery too. Many of the women already had this as a previous skill so totally enjoyed regaining the opportunity to get back into it again and to also teach their skill to those who wanted to learn. We all worked collaboratively to make it a successful and welcoming space.

MANCHESTER URBAN DIGGERS

We are thankful as well to the collaboration with Manchester Urban Diggers. This charity is for those who enjoyed sharing a special peaceful space with the community whilst if possible planting a few fruit and veg, or assisting with harvesting. People can also partake in music, singing, cooking and or joining in conversational English or just eating healthy organic food together. This allotment space broke barriers in so many ways, alleviated some symptoms of anxiety and depression.

YOGA

Yoga became a welcomed space for one hour each fortnight whilst children were at school and the women could take some time for themselves. Rosalind our volunteer professional teacher ran the sessions and brought relief and relaxation to women who knew what it meant to their wellbeing.

REFUGEE INTEGRATION SERVICE

Over the last year the RIS project has seen some considerable changes. In May, due to a cut in funding the Housing Access Scheme (HAS), a sister project of RIS and managed by RIS staff, had to close.

As a result of this reduction in funding, we had to let go two of our part time staff members, Hassan and Tsegaye who were not only excellent in their roles but also provided multilingual support. This meant the project struggled to deliver at its usual capacity.

However, RIS have managed to secure some excellent volunteers from our Shared Routes Project, in Tamador and Portia who are an enormous help in triage, translation and some casework.

Beyond internal staffing, housing has become an increasingly complex area as the council are reducing the level of assistance to all groups and family reunion is no longer being funded. We have seen housing allowance increase which is positive as it encourages private landlords to get on board with housing our clients, which could open more options to clients.

DESPITE THESE CHANGES, THE PROJECT HAS INCREASED THEIR SUPPORT FROM THE PREVIOUS YEAR.

171* **322**

CASES OPENED IN 2023/2024

116* **245**

INDIVIDUAL CLIENTS SUPPORTED IN 2023/24

*** 2022 - 2023 YEAR STATS**



WHO RIS SUPPORT:

- 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

203 CASES RELATED TO SUPPORT WITH HOUSING

36 CASES RELATED TO MANCHESTER MOVE

3 CASES RELATED TO ACCESS TO EDUCATION

29 CASES SUPPORTING WITH BENEFITS, GRANTS AND LOANS

13 CASES SUPPORTING WITH IMMIGRATION ISSUES

4 CASES SUPPORTING WITH ACCESS TO HEALTHCARE

8 CASES SUPPORTING WITH TAXES AND BILLS

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 2023

> 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 2024 with another Refugee World Cup. Please check our website and social media for updates on this.

120

REFUGEES SUPPORTED EACH WEEK



OUR FUNDERS

- AB Charitable Trust
- Access To Justice Foundation
- Forever Manchester
- GMCA
- Henry Smith
- Lloyds Bank Foundation
- MACC
- Manchester City Council
- National Lottery Community Fund
- Newby Trust
- Refugee Action
- Sported
- Sport England
- The Bulldog Trust
- The Tudor Trust



OUR PARTNERS

- ACM
- Asylum Aid
- Asylum Matters
- Bately Law Solicitors
- Boaz Trust
- British Red Cross
- Care4Calais
- Caritas
- CAST
- Chorlton Refugee Aid
- Citizen's Advice Bureau
- City of Sanctuary
- Cornerstones
- DISRUPT
- Emerge/touchwood
- ESOL Manchester
- Flow Max Group
- Freedom From Torture
- Greater Manchester Combines Authority
- Greater Manchester Immigration Aid Unit
- Growing together Levenshulme
- Home in Manchester
- IAS
- Manchester BME Network
- Manchester City Council
- Manchester Metropolitan University
- Manchester Urban Diggers
- Maz Linford
- Migrant Help
- Nathan Dale Gardners
- Nazarene Theological College
- NIA Centre
- NRPF
- One Manchester
- Precision Dentist Clinic
- PRIDES
- Princess Butcher
- Project 17
- Projekts
- Rainbow Haven
- Refugee Action
- Refugee Aid
- Refugees at Home
- Regional Strategic Migration Partnership
- Revive
- Salvation Army
- SASCA
- Save the Children
- Shelter
- St James Church
- Street League
- The Little Sri Lankan
- The Mustard Tree
- The Woolf Institute
- UKIL
- Women's Aid



FINANCIAL REVIEW

INCOME: £705,190.00

GIFTS AND DONATIONS: 5.5%
CHARITABLE INCOME: 94.5%
OTHER INCOME: 0.01%

EXPENDITURE: £515,212.00

RAISING FUNDS: 0.1%
CHARITABLE ACTIVITIES: 99.9%

NET INCOME: £189,978.00
TOTAL FUNDS AT START OF YEAR: £328,564.00
TOTAL FUNDS AT END OF YEAR: £518,542.00