

Leeds Asylum Seekers'
Support Network

LASSN



2017
2018

Annual Review

Leeds Asylum Seekers' Support Network (LASSN)

was set up in 1999 to respond to the pressing unmet needs of refugees and asylum seekers living in Leeds. Most of the people we work with have experienced acute isolation, mental health issues, language difficulties and immense uncertainty over their asylum claim.

Our Vision

Asylum seekers, refugees and other migrants will be safe, respected, supported and empowered to rebuild their lives free of persecution

Our Objectives

LASSN wants asylum seekers, refugees, and other migrants to be:

SUPPORTED and relieved from hardship and distress. We want local people to be central to this support

EMPOWERED We want asylum seekers, refugees, and other migrants to be empowered to rebuild their lives and fulfil their potential. We want individuals and communities to have a voice and to influence the communities they live in

INTEGRATED We want asylum seekers, refugees, and other migrants to feel settled and safe in their new environment in Leeds. We want Leeds to be a place of welcome and understanding, and for the general public, organisations, politicians and policy makers to understand how to collaborate with asylum seekers, refugees, and other migrants to make this happen

Our Mission

LASSN will meet needs of refugees and asylum seekers and other migrants in Leeds and will raise awareness of issues they face

How we work

RESPECTFUL: We respect asylum seekers, refugees, and other migrants, and the huge contribution they make to LASSN, Leeds and to the UK

INFORMED: We listen to asylum seekers, refugees, and other migrants to make sure we are meeting their current needs

EMPOWERING: We work in ways that empower asylum seekers refugees, and other migrants, and in ways that empower local people to become involved in this support

PARTNERSHIP: We seek good relationships with other organisations so that asylum seekers refugees, and other migrants get the most appropriate services

VOLUNTEERS: We think volunteers are vital to effective working with asylum seekers, refugees, and other migrants, and know that volunteers benefit greatly from their interaction with the people they help.

2017 2018

a year in numbers

WE SUPPORTED

260
asylum seekers and refugees received one to one support from LASSN (and a further 225 people if you count family and dependents)

271 people volunteered with LASSN
4991 nights of accommodation were provided by Grace Hosts

WE EMPOWERED

49
people were able to improve their social connections and their overall health and well-being thanks to our Befriending volunteers

13 English at Home students successfully enrolled on a college ESOL course, and 40 now attend weekly free classes outside their homes

17 refugees and asylum seekers volunteered with LASSN in a variety of roles, from assisting with recruitment and selection, training volunteers, public speaking, translating, organising trips and socials and making films, and publicising our work

WE INTEGRATED

184
people were supported to improve their confidence in speaking and writing English, through our befriending and English at Home projects



Everyone we work alongside has been encouraged to find out more about life in the UK, and to understand more about where they live, and how Leeds works

493 posts on migrationpartnership.org.uk helped keep 19,000 people abreast of the changing face of migrant and refugee services in Leeds and beyond

Befriending

Matching someone with a befriending volunteer can reduce isolation, improve well-being, and encourages integration and greater self-reliance among asylum seekers and refugees.

Volunteers also provide practical support to the people they are matched with: helping people to access health and social care services, to make stronger connections with community organisations and to make friends.

In 2017/18 our 42 volunteers supported 29 different people. Volunteers provide support for about 9 months, although some matches can continue for several years.

Habib's Story

We met Habib at our old offices at Ebor Court: he had been in Leeds just three days and had been told that LASSN could help him. We immediately told him about the PAFRAS drop in and Mill Hill Chapel conversation classes. At PAFRAS they told him about St Vincent's Support Centre on York Road; and at St Vincent's he found out about local football sessions. And of course, eventually, we matched him with a LASSN befriending volunteer.

Habib has since gone on to have a very successful match with a volunteer who has helped him to find college, go to see Manchester United (they're both life-long fans), and now they are looking into some volunteering opportunities for Habib while he waits for his decision.

This is a great example of how closely LASSN works with other agencies and how a simple direction can help people feel more settled in Leeds."

English at Home

matches volunteer tutors with refugee and asylum seeker learners who are unable to attend mainstream English classes. Tutors deliver classes based on what's important to learners and tailor their lessons to their everyday needs.

Over the last year, one-to-one English lessons were delivered to 121 people from who would otherwise be excluded from learning English because of caring responsibilities and/or health problems. 93 tutors delivered 2,023 hours of teaching and helped 13 people to take up college courses and another 40 into community based ESOL classes.

Rosa's Story



When I first came to the UK I only spoke a few words of English, but now I am here speaking in front of you all!"

An important part of the English at Home training is having a learner share their experience, and these were the words spoken by Rosa as she told a group of 15 volunteers about the difference having a teacher has made to her. She shared about the nerves she felt when she first met her teacher, but how she now had the confidence to share in front of this group.

Rosa has gone on to pass her driving theory test and now volunteers with a Solicitors firm specialising in asylum claims, as she pursues her dream of becoming a lawyer.



Grace Hosting

links households with a spare room (hosts) with destitute asylum seekers (guests) who cannot stay in hostels or access mainstream homeless accommodation. Without our support, some people have no option but to sleep rough.

Hosts welcome Guests into their homes with a hot meal, a bed for the night, breakfast in the morning – as well as providing emotional and practical support.

Over the last year, 53 different Grace hosts provided 4991 nights of accommodation to 70 different guests.

Hosts provided emergency accommodation (less than a week) for 54 people, who spent a total of 1,339 nights staying with 53 different households.

The number of longer stay guests rose from 18 in 2016/17 to 22 in 2017/18. Longer stay guests stayed a total of 3,659 nights, with the average length of stay rising from 22 to 24 weeks.

Abdulla's Story

Sally writes:

"I try to be as organised as possible when we're expecting a guest, but on this occasion the house was chaotic. My eldest daughter was visiting, my youngest daughter and her friend were here and as Abdulla our guest arrived, so did the delivery of all the stuff we needed for our new bathroom - and I still needed to cook dinner.

Abdulla loved it. He set to helping to unload the bathroom stuff, taking it upstairs (I hadn't even shown him round the house), then chatted to my daughters and friend, was interested in the dinner I was cooking. He was such a lovely man. His English was fantastic and by the end of dinner, he was talking to my husband about a particular philosopher – they lost me there!

It was such a pleasure to spend time with him. The next morning as he was leaving, he wanted me to tell David that he had loved spending time with us and felt that he was like a brother. I almost cried. We were so happy to hear from him the next day – his papers had come through. Such a lovely experience."

Connecting Opportunities

Integration and Employment Befriending offers people who are thinking about work the chance to build their confidence, improve their English, and to making contacts and friends in their local community, finding out about the help and services available to them.

LASSN's volunteers help with these issues, by meeting up with someone for a couple of hours each week, building a relationship with them, and encouraging them to try new things.

"Connecting Opportunities works with new migrants to develop their skills and opportunities to find work and be part of the local community. The project is funded by the European Social Fund and the National Lottery, through the Big Lottery Fund."

Rana's Story

Janet writes:

"When I first met my befriender, Rana, through the 'Connecting Opportunities' project, though nervous, I felt that we had an immediate connection.

Rana is a proactive person and her main aim for Befriending was improving her English skills towards studying and practising in the UK as a pharmacist. I am full of admiration for her and what she has achieved so far with the help of befriending. She is now shadowing in a pharmacy, has enrolled on an IELTS (International English Language Testing System) and increased confidence generally. It has been very rewarding for me to be part of this journey and to see the progress Rana has made.

Through Befriending, Rana and I have built strong connections and empowered each other. Our time together on 'Connecting Opportunities' is drawing to an end but I'm sure our friendship will carry on.

Volunteering

Many of our volunteers bring direct experience of migration, and some have even been helped by LASSN in the past.

There are four main ways of volunteering with LASSN – volunteering for one of each of our projects.

In addition to this during 2017/18 LASSN volunteers helped us by

- Appearing on local TV news and radio
- Cataloguing and developing ESOL teaching resources
- Developing policy
- Evaluating our work, and suggesting improvements to the way we do things
- Giving talks at conferences
- Interpreting and translating for people with no English
- Organising trips and outings
- Participating in research programmes
- Performing or playing music at events
- Publicising the work of LASSN and in particular helpinleeds.com
- Raising money in aid of LASSN's work
- Refereeing at the Refugee World Cup
- Representing LASSN at external meetings
- Sharing their experience of volunteering, or of being helped by LASSN
- Staffing our events and AGM
- Standing for election as a Trustee and helped with Governance
- Supporting the office with Admin tasks
- Taking photographs and filming our work
- Teaching and inducting new volunteers

“

I feel I am supporting something very useful and can help make a difference to refugees' experience in this country.

”



**GET
INVOLVED
TODAY!**

Information and Awareness Raising

Information and awareness raising remains central to our mission: tackling prejudice, encouraging understanding, and fostering interaction and integration with the local community.

Lassn.org.uk

14,700 different people looked at our main website lassn.org.uk more than 100,000 times - an increase of about 85% compared to the previous year

Free Resources

All of LASSN's policies, procedures and training materials remain online, free of charge, for anyone to use or adapt.

helpinleeds.com

We updated helpinleeds.com, our online directory of groups and services offering help to asylum seekers and refugees in Leeds, and collaborated with other agencies attempting to produce similar platforms. This year 6,000 visitors used helpinleeds.com 17,000 times.

Shared Experiences

LASSN clients, volunteers and staff have talked about their experiences on local TV news, radio phone-ins and documentaries; and we've given talks in churches, schools, and universities.

Social Media

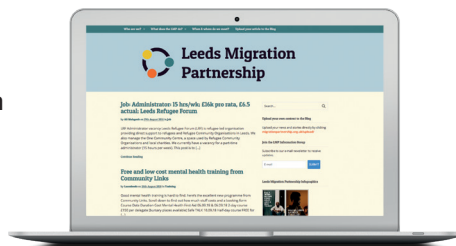
LASSN's social media presence has increased, with over 1300 Facebook likes, 1500 Twitter followers.

Media Coverage

In January 2018 we ran an extremely successful campaign to raise awareness of Grace Hosting, gaining coverage across a wide variety of local and regional media, as well as in the House of Commons. You can read more about this here: lassn.org.uk/grace-hosting-in-the-news/

migrationpartnership.org.uk

In October 2017 leedsmultiagency.org.uk – our blog on local asylum, refuge and other migration issues – rebranded as migrationpartnership.org.uk. Since then we have doubled our audience from 8,500 to 19,000 users.



Our partners and collaborators

Partnership and collaboration is at the heart of all LASSN's work. In particular, we have some formal partnerships with a number of organisations across Leeds and the region

We work closely with **Positive Action for Refugees and Asylum Seekers (PAFRAS)** and **British Red Cross** who provide support and advice for clients in Grace Hosting

Leeds Refugee Forum: A representative from Leeds Refugee Forum attends LASSN Trustees Meeting in an advisory capacity

We help to raise donations for the **Leeds Hardship Fund** for destitute asylum seekers, along with 8 other organisations

We use our work with destitute people to inform our membership of **West Yorkshire Destitute Asylum Network** and the **No Accommodation Network** who both seek to influence regional and national policy on homelessness asylum seekers and refugees

We are part of **MESH: Migrant English Support Hub** – an online one stop shop for all English language learning opportunities in Leeds: <http://lel.help>

We are members of **PSI-Volition** – who represent third sector organisations in Leeds with an interest in mental health, well being, and **Voluntary Action Leeds**

We are on the Steering Group of the **Migrant Access Point with Leeds City Council**

We are active members of **Leeds Migration Partnership** and contribute to the Strategy, Operations and Information strands. We started (and still maintain) the migrationpartnership.org.uk blog which acts as a weekly bulletin for individuals and organisations who support asylum seekers refugees and other migrants in Leeds

We are a **Connecting Opportunities** partner: Connecting Opportunities works with new migrants to develop their skills and opportunities to work and be part of the local community

The Hardship Fund

The Hardship Fund provides cash payments to people experiencing homelessness and destitution during the winter months.

LASSN works in partnership with six other refugee support organisations to raise and distribute funds to households with no other form of income.

In 2017/18 a total of £6,510 was raised by the partnership (£4,814 by LASSN) and distributed to 77 households in 266 separate payments.

For more information visit lassn.org.uk/hardshipfund

Our major benefactors in 2016/17 include:

Big Lottery (Reaching Communities)

Big Lottery (Building Better Opportunities)

Brelms Trust

Henry Smith Charity

Hilden Charitable Trust

Leeds City Council/ Touchstone (Migrant Access Project Plus)

Leeds Community Foundation

Tudor Trust

As well as thanking our major benefactors, we would also like to thank everyone who has helped LASSN financially over the last year – all those who have made one off donations, set up standing orders, as well as those who have held or attended a fundraising event for LASSN.

Without your help and support we could not have helped so many people in our city.

Thank you.

Finances

LASSN relies on charitable grants and donations: we receive no regular Government funding.

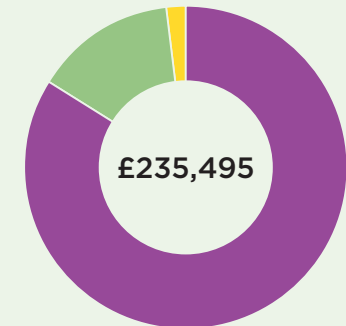
We continue to make good progress towards achieving full cost recovery for our projects, but increased competition for major grant funding makes things harder and harder.

LASSN has maintained services and rebuilt our unrestricted reserves due to the ongoing generosity of our individual donors and supporters.

Download a full set of our accounts from lassn.org.uk/accounts

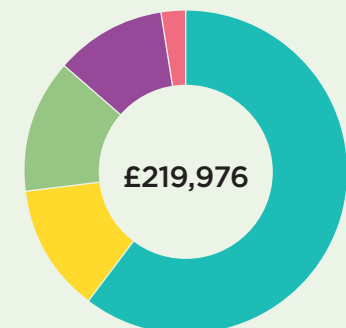
2017-18

Income



Grants 83.9%
Donations 14.4%
Other/3rd party 1.7%

Expenditure



Project Staff Costs 60.3%
Volunteer/Client Costs 12.8%
Management/Admin 13.4%
Office/Overheads 11%
Governance/Professional Fees 2.5%

Working alongside refugees and asylum seekers

We will continue to increase the opportunities for refugees and asylum seekers and other migrants to help us plan new projects, to give feedback on the things we do, and to help us evaluate our work. We will increase the opportunities for refugees and other migrants to find paid employment and sessional work with LASSN.

Helping new refugees to settle in Leeds

We will complete a Transition Guide (transitionguide.org.uk) - an online resource to help new refugees in Leeds - with step-by-step instructions to finding housing, work, and the help they want. We will make it open-source, so that people in other areas can use it as a template if they wish to develop similar resources.

Ensuring volunteering is fun, safe, and worthwhile

We will continue to encourage a wider range of people to volunteer with LASSN, especially people with experience of seeking asylum. We will review the training we provide to volunteers, to ensure the support we offer is relevant, enjoyable, and up to date. We will continue to use the results of our Annual Volunteers Survey to inform all aspects of volunteering with LASSN.

Making sure we keep everyone's data safe

We will review our data protection

arrangements, so that everyone we work with – refugees, volunteers, staff, website users - knows and understands what information we keep, why we keep it, and how we use it.

Spreading our influencing through partnership work.

We will remain active members of Leeds Migration Partnership, and Migrant English Support Hub, and use our values and experiences to influence and shape policy and practice through our membership of West Yorkshire Destitute Asylum Network (WYDAN) and the No Accommodation Network (NACCOM). We will also develop formal partnerships with other agencies to develop and deliver joint projects to address destitution, poor access to transport, loneliness, and crime.

Sharing our resources

We will continue to share as much as we can online, and offer help to other organisations who want to build on our work. We will make changes to the lassn.org.uk website to make it easier to find these resources, and to find out about our work in more detail.

Finances

We will review all aspects of our financial systems and fundraising practice, to ensure that we have robust checks in place, that each element of our work is properly resourced, and to ensure that everything we do is in line with LASSN's vision and values.

1 Become a volunteer

we desperately need volunteers, and in exchange for your time and enthusiasm, we offer high quality training and support, and the chance to make a real difference to someone's life. Find out more here:

lassn.org.uk/volunteers

2 Become a friend of LASSN

sign up to our newsletter, and get updates on the work we do and the difference we make

lassn.org.uk/news

3 Become a member of LASSN

you may not have the time to volunteer but you can support us by becoming a member of LASSN. Membership allows you to:

- show your support for our aims and objectives
- get regular updates on our work
- vote at LASSN's Annual General Meeting

Membership is £5 a month (free for unwaged people, asylum seekers and LASSN volunteers)

lassn.org.uk/members

4 Make a donation

donations, no matter how small, can make a big difference to our work. You can donate here:

lassn.org.uk/donate

5 Organise a fundraising event

we'd love you to hold a fundraising or sponsored event for LASSN. Here's how you can help:

lassn.org.uk/fundraising

If you need any help or more information please contact our office:

0113 373 1759 / admin@lassn.org.uk

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Support Network**

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