

Leeds Asylum Seekers'
Support Network

LASSN



2021
—
2022

Annual Review

Leeds Asylum Seekers' Support Network (LASSN)

Leeds Asylum Seekers' Support Network 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 Mission

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

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 policymakers to understand how to collaborate with asylum seekers, refugees, and other migrants to make this happen

How We work

RESPECTFUL: We respect asylum seekers, refugees, and other migrants and the huge contribution they make to LASSN, Leeds and 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 receive/or have access to the most appropriate services

VOLUNTEERING: 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

2021
2022

A YEAR ON A PAGE

WE SUPPORTED

374 Asylum seekers and refugees received one-to-one support from LASSN (and a further 304 people with family and dependents included)

213 people volunteered with LASSN, 46 of which (22%) describe themselves as migrants

3491 nights of accommodation were provided by Grace Hosts and Grace House

£6510

was distributed in hardship grants to



households

WE EMPOWERED



Befriending volunteers helped 153 people to improve their social connections and their overall health and wellbeing



46 asylum seekers, refugees and other people with lived experience of migration volunteered with LASSN: assisting with recruitment and selection; training volunteers; representing LASSN at conferences and Strategic meetings; public speaking; interpreting and translating; organising trips and socials; making films and taking photos; cooking; playing music and publicising our work



All LASSN clients were offered phones, data, and credit to help them stay in touch and access support. 197 households took up this offer and received 149 digital devices (phones, tablets, laptops, PCs, WIFI dongles) LASSN distributed to migrants in Leeds

WE INTEGRATED

260 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

266

posts on migrationpartnership.org.uk helped to keep 20,000 people abreast of the changing face of migrant and refugee services in Leeds.

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 access health and social care services, make stronger connections with community organisations, and make friends.

In the last year, 27 asylum seekers and refugees were matched with 24 volunteers who provided one-to-one support. In addition, 51 asylum seekers and refugees participated (on and offline) in Meet and Connect Social groups and were helped by 19 volunteers.

Befriending enabled refugees and befrienders to learn more about Leeds and make greater social connections, despite the restrictions imposed by the Pandemic. Through lockdown, the support was focused on practicalities like getting people food and medicines, providing accessible information and protective equipment, and delivering emotional support through Zoom and phone calls.

Nour's Story

When Jane was introduced to Nour, she lived in an unsuitable tiny bedroom with her two babies.

After multiple emails, Nour was rehoused but remained isolated and struggling mentally.

Over the past year, the Befriending project has supported Nour to find clothing toys, nursery places, food parcels, Bank accounts, a mobile phone and help with her asylum claim.

"I think having coffees and chats is, in some ways, perhaps the best support I have given Nour. I have found it challenging at times, but it has been hugely rewarding, especially now, to see how much her life has changed in just one year."



Grace Hosting & Grace House

Grace Hosting linked 12 households with a spare room (hosts) with 15 destitute asylum seekers (guests) who cannot stay in hostels or access mainstream homeless accommodation. Most of these arrangements last between 2 months and one year.

Grace House opened in March 2020 and provides accommodation to up to 4 asylum-seeking men who are not eligible for Home Office support. With secure accommodation for between six and nine months, guests can access the legal and health support they need to be able to get their asylum claim back on track.

in
2021-22

Grace
Hosting & Grace
House provided

3491

nights of
accommodation

to

24

different
guests

Equivalent to

9

years

Samuel's Story

"Samuel was supported by the Grace hosting project for 13 months and stayed with 23 different hosts before he moved into Grace House.

When you don't have a place to stay and keep having to move from host to host it is emotionally disturbing, I hated the one-night stays, they were really too much for me. Grace house has given me a stable place to be and has helped me to heal.

When I moved in I had great anxiety. If you have not migrated before this anxiety is hard to explain. I left home years and years ago and I still haven't settled and in this sense am still migrating. Your freedom is on the edge, you could be deported, you have nowhere to live and cannot work but you are still expected to integrate even though the connections that you make can be taken away at any time.

For 9 months I have felt like I had a home and this gave me comfort and created change in me. I have had 9 months of freedom in a homely environment which has helped me in many ways."

GRACE & EVA'S HOUSE

In June 2022, we opened Eva House, our second house, where four destitute asylum seeker men can stay for nine months. Like Grace House which opened in 2020, Eva's house has been loaned to LASSN for free. LASSN has to raise money to meet the running costs of both houses, and this is mainly through the generosity of LASSN donors.

Having a stable environment enables people to focus on their asylum case. One-to-one support is also provided to help people work through any emotional difficulties and signposting them to specialist agencies such as dentistry, college, voluntary work, and health care.

Developing a community approach to living is at the heart of what we aim to achieve to ensure that people feel safe and comfortable in their homes. We have a gardening group which has positively impacted guests' mental well-being.

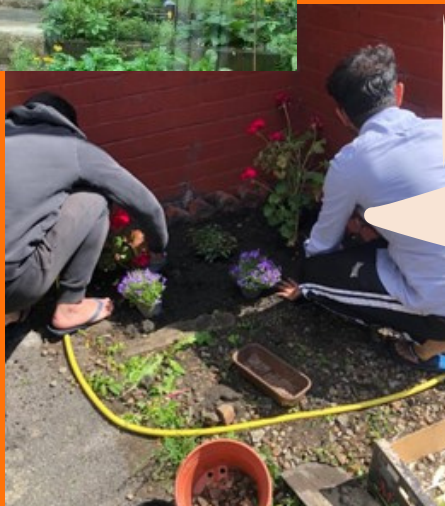
In addition to paying for the running costs, donations have enabled us to give Guests money to buy fruit and vegetables and also engage in sports activities.



"Grace house has given me a stable place to be and has helped me to heal."



"When I moved in, I had great anxiety. If you have not migrated before this anxiety is hard to explain. I left home years and years ago and I still haven't settled and in this sense am still migrating. Your freedom is on the edge, you could be deported, you have nowhere to live and cannot work..."



"...For 9 months I have felt like I had a home, and this helped to give me comfort and created change in me. I have had 9 months of freedom in a homely environment which has helped me in many ways."

English at Home

Volunteer tutors are matched with learners who cannot 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, 75 tutors spent 1705 hours of English lessons with 105 learners. LASSN tutors helped 31 people take college courses and mainstream ESOL classes.

Reaching your Goals

When we first meet a learner, we ask what specific things they would like to achieve in their time with us. For Berlin, this was to have the confidence to attend a school parent's evening and improve her writing.

Despite having five children, including a one-year-old, Berlin has worked remarkably hard and, within a year, is now too good to continue with English at Home as she has reached such a high level!

At the closing review, she told me that the week before, she had managed to go along to her daughter's parents' evening and understood nearly all that was said, having the confidence to ask questions and get explanations where needed. She had also written a piece which was published in a Zine for the local area, showcasing how much her writing had improved.

We are incredibly proud of Berlin and know she will continue to grow in confidence and achieve whatever she sets her mind to.



Connecting Opportunities

This project offers new migrants various avenues to develop their employability skills and explore opportunities to work through mentoring and befriending. The support ranges from building confidence and improving English to making contacts and friends in their local community.

This year, 39 volunteers supported 76 people who wanted to move closer to work or study. Weekly Tea & Talk conversation groups were also facilitated throughout the year, where 27 people met online and offline.

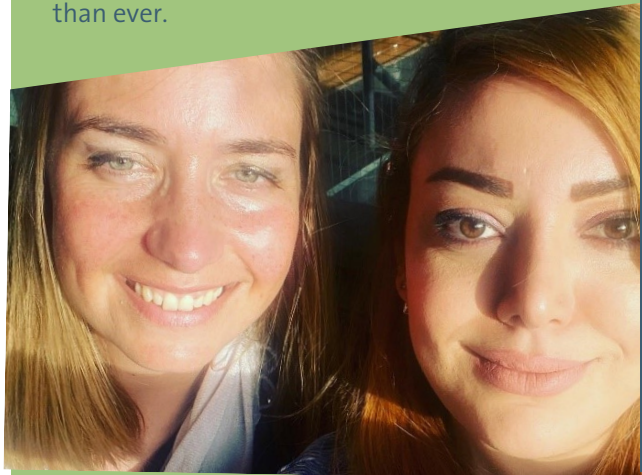


Magda & Mona

Magda: Taking part in Connecting Opportunities has been an enriching experience as I have met many interesting people through the befriending process. My befriender and I come from different countries and backgrounds in terms of social systems and political situations, but we are so alike. We share the same interests and have the same fears and joys, which we discuss over a nice cup of coffee almost every weekend. Mona is lovely, optimistic, hardworking and funny, so spending time with her is a pleasure.

Mona: I have had a good experience of friendship with Magda, that was so good we meet each other and spend some time together having a nice chat. Magda has always been giving positive energy and spoken highly of me. We share good and bad moments, I'm not feeling lonely, and she is very kind and helpful.

Magda: The project is aimed at helping people who, for various reasons, had to leave their loved ones behind and need someone to chat with, as no one likes to be on their own. I never imagined how big an impact it would have on me, though. I have gained an amazing person as a friend, got to know different cultures and was amazed by its beauty. I think both of us learnt something new and became even more open-minded, which is so important, especially now when unity among all of us is more important than ever.



Information & Awareness Raising

Providing Information and raising awareness of issues around asylum and refuge are central to LASSN’s mission: tackling prejudice, encouraging understanding, and fostering interaction and integration with the local community. In the last year



lassn.org.uk

18,000 people looked at our website - where all of LASSN’s policies, procedures and training materials remain online, free of charge, for anyone to use or adapt – as with an online library of more than 100 ESOL resources.

helpinleeds.com

4,000 people used helpinleeds.com - LASSN’s directory of groups and services offering help to asylum seekers and refugees in Leeds.

Social Media

We took our message to a wider audience via Facebook and Twitter. 2,500 people have liked us on [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/lassn) and 2,100 people follow us on [Twitter](https://twitter.com/lassn).

LASSN continues to host and update migrationpartnership.org.uk

– a multi-author blog, focused on local asylum, refuge and other migration issues.

The site posts about 20 articles a month. This site has 20,000 regular users who visited 120,000 times in the last year.



Our partners and collaborators

Partnership and collaborations are 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.



Positive Action for Refugees & Asylum Seekers

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.

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 the **No Accommodation Network and Asylum Matters** - who both influence regional and national policy on homelessness, asylum seekers and refugees. We also provide free WiFi access to people staying in WYDAN and LEDAS accommodation.

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



Leeds Migration Partnership

We are active members of **Leeds Migration Partnership** and contribute to the Strategy, Operations and

Information strands. We started (and still maintain) the 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 2021-22 a total of £6,510 was raised by the partnership (£4,814 by LASSN) and distributed to 77 households in 266 cash payments.

Read more about the Hardship Fund here:

lassn.org.uk/hardship



Digital Inclusion

As well as supplying devices and SIM cards for free – we continue to fund a digital inclusion project with Leeds Refugee Forum. This provides clients with both devices and training on how to use them.

[Solidaritech.com](https://solidaritech.com) continue to provide portable technology free of charge. And as this partnership enters its second year, we hope to create a lending library to supply tablets to asylum seekers and other people living in temporary accommodation.

SOLIDARITECH



LASSN Finances 2021-22

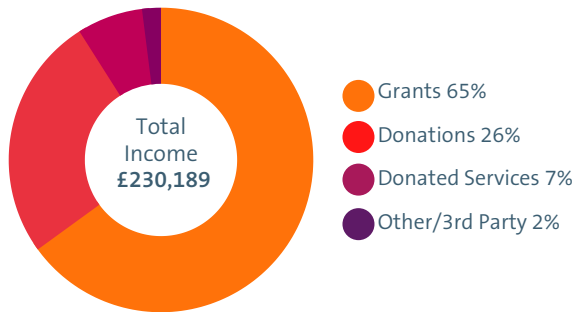
LASSN relies on charitable grants and donations: we receive no regular Government funding.

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.

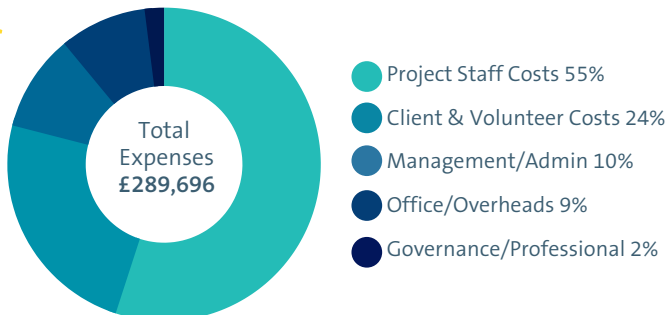
LASSN has maintained services and rebuilt our unrestricted reserves due to the ongoing generosity of our individual donors and supporters.

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

Income



Expenses



Thank YOU.

As well as thanking our major donors and 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 of individuals and our major benefactors listed below, we could not have helped so many people in our city during 2021-22.



the
Tudortrust



Leeds
Community
Foundation

and a special thank you to The Holy Family of Bordeaux in Britain and Ireland!

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 in someone's life.

Find more here: lassn.org.uk/volunteer

2 BECOME A FRIEND OF LASSN

Sign up for our newsletter, and get updates on our work and the difference we make. Visit: lassn.org.uk/signup

3 BECOME A FRIEND 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) Visit: lassn.org.uk/members

4 MAKE A DONATION

Donations can make a big difference to our work, no matter how small. You can donate here: <http://bit.ly/donatelassn>

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

Thankyou



Leeds Asylum Seekers' Support Network

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Websites

lassn.org.uk

helpinleeds.com

migrationpartnership.org.uk

newtoleeds.org



facebook.com/lassnleeds



twitter.com/lassnleeds

[Charity No. 1092647](#)

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