



To Jon,

As we enter autumn 2024, we are delighted to bring you a new edition of our Friends of LASSN newsletter. We know it's been a tough summer for many, so we hope that this update on what LASSN has been up to proves to be uplifting and informative.

Project updates



LASSN's Mark of Quality

Volunteers are invaluable to LASSN; without them, we could not offer the practical support and friendship many refugees lack.

In July, we were given the "Leeds Volunteering Quality Award", which is given to organisations "who demonstrate they work to a high standard of volunteer management and support and that they have good systems and procedures in place to support volunteers effectively".

As we continue to grow, one of our most significant challenges is finding sufficient volunteers to match with people looking for support. It's harder than ever to find new volunteers, and we rely on friends and supporters spreading the word for us.

So, if you - or someone you know - would like to spend some time supporting a refugee or asylum seeker, please [look at the opportunities available](#) and [register your interest here](#).

We're also looking for Trustees

A number of Trustees will also be standing down in the next year, and we are looking to replace them. In particular we want to recruit

- **Trustees from ethnically diverse communities.** Although most of the people we work alongside are from racialised communities, most of our Trustees are not. We want more Trustees to be drawn from the diverse communities we serve, or to have direct experience of migration to the UK.
- **Younger Trustees.** The average age of Trustees is currently 57, and we'd love to get some younger people involved in how we run things.

If you'd like to find out more about what being a Trustee at LASSN involves, and the support and training we can provide, please look at our [Trustee Information pack](#), or contact our Director, Jon Beech (jon@lassn.org.uk, 07845 298047) for an informal chat.

English at Home



Our **English at Home** project offers English lessons to those who need them, who, for various reasons (e.g. disabilities, caring responsibilities) are currently unable to attend other types of classes. Our volunteers help to develop their students' language skills so that they can better cope with everyday life and become more confident with their language skills.

Over the last year, 93 volunteer tutors have taught 98 learners, providing over 1,750 hours of teaching. We've seen people gaining the confidence to complete job applications, volunteer with local organisations, and even seen some students' pass complicated tests, like driving theory or the B1, Life in the UK tests.

We also ran our first visit to a local College, with the aim of helping those interested in attending further education find out some more information on what to expect from College and how to apply. Over the past year we've seen 45 of our students gain the confidence to sign up to either College or other types of regular classes.

If you are interested in volunteering as an English at Home volunteer, **follow this link**. We offer all our volunteer tutors with all the essential training they need, as well as providing them with as many **teaching resources as possible**.



The following is a story from one of our English at Home Volunteers, about their student, Maryam;

“When I first met Maryam, I was greeted with a house full of beautifully crocheted items, including blankets, slippers and even an ornate framed piece of art. Through an interpreter she told me of her love of creating these beautiful things. However, she was isolated and not at any groups, with very limited English so she was referred for an English at Home tutor to help her improve her language skills and make connections with people.

A year on, it’s wonderful to see Maryam so busy now that she no longer needs a teacher! She is attending numerous local classes and groups, making friends and feeling like part of the community. As well as this, she is using her crocheting skills to make and sell goods to raise money for another charity! She has also been teaching others how to crochet so they can enjoy it too. Well done, Maryam!!!”

Grace Hosting



Our Grace Hosting project aims to provide a safe environment for people who are struggling with the dual hardships of being homeless while also trying to resolve their immigration status with an openly hostile immigration system.

LASSN currently operates two houses that host 4 asylum seekers each. These are called Grace House (opened in February 2020) and Eva House (opened in June 2022). The guests who live there are referred to LASSN exclusively via PAFRAS and the British Red Cross.

LASSN volunteer hosts continue to open their homes to asylum seekers who need a place to stay while they search for more permanent accommodation.

This year we launched a new type of hosting that we offer named 'Cluster Hosting'. Instead of relying on a single Hosting household, this new model consists of 3 different households hosting one guest for a period of one week each, which adds up to a total of three weeks of accommodation for the guest. At the end of this three-week period, the guest, and the households involved, make a decision about what to do next.

So far, two individuals have been through this cluster hosting process, which gave them a safe place to live while they awaited accommodation from the Home Office. Both of the guests said that they had a wonderful experience with cluster housing.

A Cluster Host's Experience

"Each morning Adjo makes his own porridge sometimes adding fruit, prunes, seeds or syrup and he also enjoys fruit smoothies. He has gone out for daily walks and was most helpful during the week in the garden and helping to wash up. He is trying to learn how to cook and on Friday we had fish and chips together. Adjo has now registered to do voluntary work which starts in September. He talks about missing his family but is appreciative of the support that he feels from us all"*

If you'd like to find out more about becoming a Host, or to volunteer to support people living in Grace or Eva's House, please contact jo@lassn.org.uk

More accommodation on the way...

We also have some extremely exciting news about developments within Grace Hosting and Housing - which we'll share as soon as we've finalised all the details!



Welcome and Connect



Our Welcome and Connect project launched in April 2023 and supports new refugees as they get to know their new city and make the most of what Leeds has to offer, from learning to work to leisure and cultural activities. In Many 2024, we decided to reduce the number of trips and group activities we arranged for participants to focus on increasing the amount of one-to-one support. This has meant putting the Tea and Talk group on pause for now and instead offering trips and activities every couple of months.

The support Welcome and Connect offers is not just from individual volunteers - we're grateful for the support we've received from local businesses and agencies who have offered the following workshops and activities;

- Digital Literacy Training Courses provided by 100% Digital Leeds and Virgin Money.
- A Woodworking Workshop run by Landmark Trust and the opportunity to help to restore Calverly Old Hall to its former glory!
- A CV and job application workshop facilitated by Leeds Building Society.
- A Creative Candle Painting workshop organised by The Princes Trust.

- An invitation by Leeds Rhinos to see them play on their home turf. In response to this trip, one participant stated that;

"It is a special thing. Coming here reminds me of watching my sons play cricket. It is nice to come and not just feel like a refugee, but a normal person".

If you know someone who loves Leeds and who wants to help make it a more accessible and friendly place for refugees and asylum seekers, then please tell them about volunteering with Welcome and Connect.

LASSN Recipe Book!



2024 saw the release of the "Cook Up Recipe Book" - a collaboration between LASSN and the University of Leeds Library Galleries' "Welcoming Migrants" project. Leeds is a University of Sanctuary, and this collaboration is part of a wider piece of work to ensure higher education becomes a truly safe place for all.

The book contains 15 recipes from all around the world, provided by members of LASSN's Tea and Talk group. The recipes were selected at a special Tea and Talk session where the Galleries' Student Ambassador, Saba Siddiqui, invited the group to look over and take inspiration from the Universities' internationally renowned Cookery Collection.

If you'd like a copy of the book you can contact us at barnaby@lassn.org.uk. You can donate as much as you would like for the book (free is fine, if you're on a tight budget), but our suggested donation is £7.

Information and Awareness



Back in 2018, the [New To Leeds](#) website was launched to guide new migrants living in Leeds. It drew on information created by LASSN clients and volunteers. It was designed in collaboration with refugees, covering the areas they considered most important - housing, health, money, public transport, and when the bins are collected. The website can be translated into 50 different languages and is focused on what people need to know and have, where to go in Leeds, and what people might expect from Leeds as a place to live.

This year, Salah (an English at Home Volunteer) helped check and update the 84 pages of the website, as well as all the many links that they contained. Salah also created a whole new section for New Refugees - to help guide people through the 28 days following a successful refugee decision, where they are expected to find a home, open a bank account, get a job and/or claim benefits.

This mammoth task was completed in time for Refugee Week 2024, which took place on the 17th-23rd of June.

Thank you to Leeds Community Foundation and Leeds City Council for providing some of the resources to make this happen, and mostly to our donors, whose generosity helps to keep this (and other LASSN projects) running year after year.

If **you** would like to help keep projects like this running, please consider donating or even becoming a regular donor by following [this link](#).

New To Leeds Website



Other LASSN Updates

Football, Picnics and New Staff Member

Over the summer LASSN took part in the Refugee World Cup - and while we didn't win, everyone who participated had an absolute blast!

We also held an organisational picnic in Roundhay park, which was a lovely opportunity for staff, volunteers and clients to meet, chat and relax.

This summer also saw the hiring of our new Community Fundraising & Communications Co-ordinator, Barnaby! (pictured above, right). They are extremely excited to get started!

Asylum in Leeds

This summer has been, at best, a mixed bag in terms of news relating to refugees and asylum seekers, and those who support them. We thought it was important to include in this newsletter a few news stories that could provide some hope and good news in these trying times.

Rwanda Bill Scrapped:

While the new Labour governments plans have been described as "**more of the same**" by Right To Remain, we're extremely pleased that the Conservative Party's deeply inhumane

"Rwanda Scheme" has been scrapped.

Leeds City of Sanctuary:

While Leeds was not immune to the wave of far-right violence over the summer, the local communities positive response in the face of hate has been truly inspiring.

In particular, Leeds City Council started a series of conversations with people from asylum and refugee backgrounds to ask how their services can become a more welcoming place for people seeking sanctuary from war or persecution, and two more Leeds schools were accredited as Schools of Sanctuary.

Some Useful Resources:

Lastly, if you would like some useful links that can help you to stay informed and up to date with various campaigns and advocacy opportunities, please consider exploring the following links below;



Asylum Matters

If you haven't already, sign up to Asylum Matters updates, where they share news, and advocacy and campaign updates.

[Sign up](#)



Migration Yorkshire

Check out Migration Yorkshire news for stories about migration-related policy, research and statistics.

[Read more](#)



Facts Not Fiction

To help separate fact from fiction, British Red Cross have made a new data visualisation tool on asylum and modern slavery systems

[Check it out](#)

We hope that this newsletter has managed to provide you with some good news, as well as some inspiration and pointers on how you can help LASSN and other similar organisations work towards making Leeds a truly safe and comfortable place for all the people who choose to call this wonderful city home.

To close off this newsletter, we would like to take this opportunity to truly thank everybody who has volunteered, raised funds for or donated directly to LASSN - your help truly is what makes our work possible.

We would ask anybody reading this newsletter to please consider becoming a regular donor, as regular contributions provide us with essential, unrestricted funding that plays a pivotal role in the longevity and success of our projects.



£5 per month

Could pay for a bus pass, enabling an asylum seeker to meet their volunteer match and receive support.

£10 per month

Could pay for one week of a volunteer host's expenses.

Become a Regular Donor

We also highly recommend that if you, or anybody else you know, are available to volunteer for any of our projects, then please do by following [this link!](#)



Thank you for reading, for supporting us and most crucially, for supporting Asylum Seekers and Refugees in our community.

With much appreciation

Team LASSN.