

English at Home Lottery Report 2025



Last Updated
November 2025

LASSN
Leeds Asylum Seekers' Support Network

“Your support has been a light for me in a very dark place”. **Amjad*, English at Home learner**

“Volunteering with LASSN has not only been a rewarding experience in so many ways, but has also served as a reminder that nothing is stronger than a community built on understanding and love.” **Lizzie, English at Home tutor.**

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1. What is the English at Home Project and why is it needed?

“Before I had a teacher visit in my home, I knew nothing and my eyes were closed. Now they are wide open!” **stated Zahra***, a learner from Afghanistan who arrived in Leeds illiterate in her home language and with no English. This statement refers to her growing knowledge of English, as well as understanding of everyday life in the UK.

Learning a new language is difficult at the best of times, but for some people there are many added challenges. LASSN’s English at Home Project is designed to remove the barriers to learning English for refugees and asylum seekers who are unable to attend mainstream education and classes. Issues around childcare and physical or mental health are the main reasons for referrals, so bringing a volunteer teacher to the learner’s home for one-to-one tuition makes it possible for people who may otherwise be very isolated to learn, connect and flourish.

1. What is the English at Home Project and why is it needed?

Referrals can come from organizations, family, friends or individuals. We can match anyone who lives in Leeds, is a refugee or asylum seeker with English at Entry Level 3 or lower, and has a valid reason they cannot attend classes. Learners set their own goals with lessons tailored to meet these. Goals can range from being able to use public transport to visiting the GP without an interpreter or even passing a driving test. We hope to see many more learners feeling that their eyes have been opened!

People supported this reporting period

96
Learners

82
Volunteer
Teachers*

55
New
Matches

*This only includes matched volunteers. We currently have 10 more volunteers who have been trained, and we are arranging to match during November 2025.

Impact for learners

**100%
Improved
Communication
Skills***

**100%
Increased
independence &
confidence***

**49 people
joined a
group**

**40 people
joined a
class**

**16 people
work /
volunteer**

*Limited to people who have had a teacher for more than 1 month

People supported over the 3-year funding period

169
Learners

124
Volunteers

During this reporting period, we also had 31 rematches, which are not included in the above figures. Matches may close for reasons such as change of location, ill health of volunteer or learner. Finding a new teacher and arranging the match and often extra support for someone relocating can take a considerable amount of staff time, which is not included in the report.

2. The Learner Experience



Improved Communication Skills, Confidence and Self-esteem

“I was in hospital for 2 months with no one to speak for me. I was able to use what I learned in my lessons to speak with the nurses, and I even made friends on the ward.” **Zoreena, English at Home learner**

“For the first time in my life I was able to write my name! I feel so proud.” **Anjeeli, English at Home learner**

“Rosa has done amazingly well. Over her lessons she has passed the B1 and Life in the UK exams and has also been able to join classes in a community group and at the local library. She has also been helping other Afghans who have arrived in the area to find their way around and connect to local services.” **Katy, volunteer tutor**

2. The Learner Experience

Many people referred to English at Home have extremely basic, if any, English and quite a few are also illiterate in their home language. This is often compounded by immense trauma, missing family, being in a new culture and often in stressful situations leading to a lack of confidence. Even if people are physically able to attend mainstream classes, many are unable to due to the psychological level of stress it creates. With this in mind, we are delighted to see 100% learners supported for more than a month said they felt more confident after having English at Home lessons. Often that bit of confidence has been enough to get on a bus for the first time, say hello to a neighbour or ask for help in a shop.

As the lessons we provide are all one to one, they are bespoke to the individual learning, covering what they have identified as their personal learning needs.

Jasminder*, one of our learners, had 6 children when she started with us and was heavily pregnant with her seventh. Due to this she was unable to attend classes but started with a LASSN teacher, having lessons until the week before the birth. She was then happy to resume within 3 weeks of the birth as she viewed her teacher as a friend visiting. Jasminder started with no knowledge of English, but she can now read all the alphabet and simple CVC words. She was delighted to tell us that she had managed to call the GP for one of her children too when they were ill, something she said she previously could only dream of.

Further Learning

One of the criteria for having an English at Home teacher is not being able to attend mainstream classes. However, people's circumstances often change while they are being supported by LASSN, so we work hard to connect learners with Leeds City College or other organisations running English classes when appropriate.



Several of the people we support have had no formal education, so the thought of joining College can feel very intimidating. To respond to this, we have invested a lot of time developing the relationship with Leeds City College and this year we ran 3 trips to the Enfield Centre Campus. This gave learners considering applying the opportunity to have a tour with a member of staff, meet current students, ask questions and receive support with their application. As it was a relaxed visit, learners were also able to bring their children with them, another way of removing barriers to education.

It has also allowed us to promote volunteering with LASSN to higher level students who want to volunteer and continue developing their language skills some of whom may share the same first language as our learners.

Further Learning

In recognition of this partnership, when Leeds City College received an inspection from OFSTED this year, LASSN were invited along to a meeting of partners to share our views on how we work in collaboration.

We are also part of the Project Advisory Group for the Migrant English Support Hub who have created and maintain the learningenglish.org.uk website which lists all registered English classes in Leeds in one place. This means we are well informed of suitable classes for English at Home learners that we can signpost learners to. By developing these connections, as well as with many other class providers, it is brilliant to see that 40 English at Home learners have managed to join an ESOL class to continue their learning.

Reduced Isolation and a Greater Sense of Belonging

As well as improved language skills and confidence, another key goal of the project is reducing isolation. Many people we support are very isolated when referred to LASSN for reasons mentioned such as limited English, childcare, or physical and mental health issues. So, we were really excited to see 49 learners become part of a local community group. This can be a huge step, often taking a lot of courage, and it has been wonderful to hear stories of people joining the local library, attending groups for parents and children, trekking with local walking groups, playing on sports teams, singing in choirs and much more. Other learners have shared stories about making friends with refugees who have just arrived in the area and helping them navigate the local area.

This has been made even more difficult recently with growing right-wing visibility and the anxiety it is causing for people, many not feeling safe in their homes. During a single week, children of 2 separate families we support were attacked, with these being flagged up as racially motivated. As well as offering emotional support, our volunteers were able to help signpost them to the correct authorities and communicate with the schools to prevent it from happening again.

● **Reduced Isolation and a Greater Sense of Belonging**

Despite growing hostility, many people have continued to strive to become part of the local community and make it a better place, building bridges. When asked, 70 learners replied they have made friends in the local area. One of our learners commented: *“When we make a delicious meal, we take some and share with our neighbours. On one side they are British and on the other Chinese. They say they love our food. On our daughter’s birthday they brought her a gift and some special balloons and came for the party. We love being here.”* **Salima*, Afghanistan.**

Volunteering and Employment

“I am happy. Now I can read, I can do anything. My youngest son is at school in September, and I have started to do volunteering and help people. I talk with people with dementia and give them time to tell their story. I have also started supervising other volunteers for a community theatre project and I love it.” **Fathia, English at Home learner and mother of 5 children.**

Given the number of barriers that many of the people we support face to even leave the house, it is incredible to see that 16 have managed to start volunteering to use their time to benefit others while developing new skills. An example of this is Joe* (right) who has been volunteering on a community project on a farm and was able to bring home some of the produce that was grown to provide a delicious meal



for himself and his teacher, sharing an Eritrean traditional dish. He was full of joy at being able to provide a meal, saying *“I am so happy you could come here today and eat with me. It gives me respect to be able to share.”*



●

Volunteering and Employment

We have also supported other learners to find different opportunities, including cooking food for a big celebration, learning football coaching skills, volunteering in a café and spending time with dementia patients. On these occasions volunteering not only develops the individual's confidence but helps to enrich the entire community.

At every training session for new volunteers, we invite a current learner to speak about their experience having a teacher and to offer advice. This is always powerful learning for the tutors, shaping their approach to lessons. It also is a huge thing to grow confidence in our learners. As Marie* states *“I never spoke English with more than 1 person. Wow, to speak to a group and they understand me. I feel so proud and happy.”*

We have also received reference requests from employers for previous English at Home learners. It is always such a pleasure to be asked and to see the progress people have made from when they started with a teacher at home to beginning employment.



Signposting and Support

Navigating the asylum system and knowing what support is available can be extremely difficult, even with good English. For this reason, when we first meet a client, we carry out an initial assessment to understand what support is needed and whether they are already linked with organisations that can help. We repeat this at our 3- and 6- month reviews to make sure nothing has been missed.

One example of this is Mahmoud, a father of six, who we have supported over the past few months. Mahmoud was issued a section 21 "no fault" eviction notice from his landlord and his benefits were stopped shortly afterwards as he had no proof of a tenancy. We connected him with the Citizen's Advice Bureau, called Shelter, made a referral to Engage Housing, and spoke with his local Community Hub to help him with bidding on Council Housing. As the family were left without food, we also signposted him to three food providers.



Signposting and Support

Mahmoud was also unable to receive messages from his children's school because his phone was not working, so we helped get this resolved. His wife had recently arrived in the UK, so we directed her to English classes using the Learning English website after checking with the provider to confirm the right level. With support from their volunteer tutor, she also found a dentist. Mahmoud has very basic English and is illiterate in his own language, so cannot read GP letters. As two of his children have serious medical conditions, we helped him note and keep track of their appointments, along with his own.

Mahmoud is just one example, but his story shows how complex life can become, especially at moments of crisis. We regularly signpost people to mental health support, legal aid providers, self-harm services, sewing groups or sports clubs. One reason we do not support higher numbers despite the constant demand, is that this holistic support required is time consuming but essential. Although people are referred to us to learn English, these wider needs must be addressed - otherwise people simply do not feel safe to learn and flourish.

More than a teacher

“My teacher is like a daughter to me, I love her!” **Gul Maki, English at Home learner**

“Mum changes when she comes. Normally she is quiet and a bit withdrawn but when the teacher comes, she is happy and full of joy, energy, and jokes. Nikki (the teacher) is a part of the family.” **Mahmoud, son of an English at Home learner**

“She is a legend! Such a strong woman and after all she has been through and going through she is so keen to learn. I have got a new sense of purpose in life too from teaching her.” **Shabnam, volunteer about her learner and the inspiration she is to her**

More than a teacher



We put a lot of effort into making sure that the tutor and learner will be a successful match. This means taking a lot into consideration before the match, such as geographical location and gender, but also things such as any common interests, shared language, and aspirations. Hana* (right) was matched with a teacher who also

spoke Farsi, her home language, and here they celebrated Nawroz together.

In another match, both teacher and learner were pregnant and due within a week of each other!

The one-to-one relationship can create a unique bond with learners often commenting that the teacher feels like a member of the family. This means that strong relationships can be built with friendships often continuing for years, even after LASSN have officially closed the match. The teacher really gets to understand the learners needs so they can offer the best support possible.

3. The Volunteer's Experience

“Throughout my time volunteering with LASSN, my contributions, big or small, felt constantly valued. In a sector under so much pressure, the constant assistance, advice, and support was invaluable and made the experience better for both my learner and me. One of the most enjoyable aspects of volunteering with LASSN was talking about my experiences with volunteers-in-training and feeling the sense of excitement and community radiating from all of them!

From my time with LASSN, my knowledge surrounding the asylum system has continued to develop, especially when listening to first-hand experiences. It is this knowledge that I have brought to other roles within multiple sectors and has encouraged me to remind others of the human side of the asylum system in those all-too-often debates! Volunteering with LASSN has not only been a rewarding experience in many ways but has also served as a reminder that nothing is stronger than a community built on understanding and love.” **Lizzie, former English at Home volunteer**

Without our amazing team of volunteers, we would not be able to do anything! This year we have supported 82 volunteers who have been matched with a learner. Each of these volunteers have been through our detailed compulsory training before beginning. We have an additional 10 volunteers who have also been through the comprehensive training programme and are awaiting to be matched shortly.

Core Training



“All the trainers were very good, and I enjoyed being with like-minded people...Feeling a sense of hope and solidarity. Thank goodness there’s people who want to make things better.” **Volunteer, feeding back after training**

Core Training

All volunteers complete 2 full days of core training before being matched. This includes: An Introduction to LASSN and The Asylum Journey and Teaching English at Home. Safeguarding is also a focus of both days' training sessions.

As a staff team we spend a great deal of time making sure that the training is as up to date and relevant as possible. Asylum Matters provide us with regular briefing sessions to keep us and our volunteers up to date on immigration laws.

Feedback and reflection are key to ensuring that our training is on track. Guest speakers are always well received so we have invited a previous LASSN client with lived experience of the asylum system, as well as a current English at Home tutor and learner. This gives the volunteers the opportunity to ask questions and find out more from people with relevant expertise.

Additional Training

As well as the compulsory training, we want to ensure teachers are offered opportunities to build on their skills and knowledge. We have offered many training sessions to volunteers run by experts in the field:

Updates to the Asylum System – Asylum Matters

Policy and practise can change very quickly around the asylum system. So, it has been necessary to stay informed as well as keeping volunteers updated. Asylum Matters ran a session for LASSN to look at all the changes to policy and what it means for people we support.

Preparing for the B1 Exam - Trinity College

Due to the number of learners needing to take the B1 exam for Citizenship, Trinity College led a B1 preparation workshop and a Trinity staff member is available to learners and teachers for ongoing guidance.

Teaching Beginners English

Run by an expert in language acquisition, this session was delivered in response to the growing number of learners with basic English. It provided teachers with practical guidance for teaching learners illiterate in their home language.

Additional Training

Getting the most from the online LASSN teaching resources – LASSN

As we continue to add more volunteers' resources to the LASSN website, we wanted to make sure that our volunteers can access and make the best use of them. With the help of two volunteers, who update the website on a regular basis, we ran a session to explore this and highlighted some of the best resources available.



Skill Shares and Teach and Talk



As well as expert guest speakers, we also encourage volunteers to share their knowledge with each other, as they are in a specific role and have an excellent array of skills and resources. Once a volunteer begins with LASSN, we invite them to join a Signal group where they can be informed of events and resources and to ask the group if there is any advice or resources they need.

Every 6 weeks we run a Skill Share event. These are very informal and open to all teachers to come and share any resources they have used that might be useful for others. It is also an opportunity to ask for support from the group if there is a situation/learning point that they have found challenging.

Skill Shares and Teach and Talk

As our volunteers all have different commitments, we aim to make the skill share sessions as accessible as possible offering daytime, evening, online sessions and also one in Otley as we have a high concentration of volunteers there. This is then repeated. We hope this flexibility means that volunteers can access at least one of the sessions and build connections with other volunteers. It has been lovely to see volunteers meeting up informally outside these sessions too, sharing ideas and resources.

We have also recently trialled our first Teach and Talk group. These are similar in nature to Skill Shares, offering volunteers the chance to meet others and share ideas, but after the success of the Otley Skill Share, we wanted to have groups in areas where we have many teachers. Once groups are established, we intend them to be self-sustaining and volunteer led. This will help increase peer support and the volunteer community. The first one has run, and we are looking to develop it and use our learning to form other groups in different parts of the city.

Teaching Resources

Rather than follow a set curriculum, we prefer that lessons are learner led. We provide a resources pack or first lessons to teachers, which includes tips, guidance and ideas for initial lessons.

A recent trend has been an increase in referrals for learners at beginner level and illiterate in their own language. As a result we have created a Teaching Beginners Resource pack. This was created in collaboration with tutors teaching learners at that level to make sure the content was useful. We are looking to develop a number of these packs in the future around topics such as starting to write and parents evenings at school.



Teaching Resources

Mental health and trauma are often barriers to learning. We have therefore designed a series of 8 Mental Health packs for the countries most represented by our learners. These cover key aspects that may affect a person's ability to learn a new language. We will continue to expand this selection.

Through discussions from our Skill Share groups it became clear that teachers would benefit from additional information about specific areas of language learning that pose a challenge for speakers of certain languages. With this in mind we created a series of L1 Interference Resource packs for teachers, highlighting areas that might be difficult for their learners.

Through the work of dedicated volunteers and LASSN staff, over the past three years for which we have been funded, English at Home's online resources have grown from a small library into one of the most visited parts of the LASSN website. The number of materials has more than doubled, and analytics show clearly sustained growth in both reach and engagement. This reflects our stronger emphasis on digital skills among volunteers and learners since the pandemic, and a steady investment in making our materials more accessible and useful.

Teaching Resources

User growth

- Nov 2022 – Apr 2023: 448 unique users
- Apr 2025 – Sept 2025: 858 unique users

This represents a 91% increase in people using our teaching-resources pages – almost twice as many tutors, learners and partners now drawing on our materials. Given that we usually support fewer than 100 tutors at any one time, this shows our materials are reaching a far wider audience than we ever expected, including international visitors!

Teaching Resources

What's driven the growth?

- Online resources increased from 40 to over 80, including 15 new teaching materials, 8 Mental Health Guides for Tutors, and 6 L1 Guides in 2024/25.
- Visits from Facebook and other social channels grew seventeen-fold (1,700%).
- Partners such as RETAS and the Leeds Migration Partnership now link directly to our resources.
- Dedicated digital skill-shares, have improved digital confidence among volunteers.
- Through our partnership with Solidaritech CIC, learners without devices now receive recycled laptops and tablets. Some volunteers have even donated their own old equipment, which Solidaritech wipes and repurposes safely - reducing e-waste and widening access even further.

As we continue to add high quality material to the website, we hope to reach even more people, making learning English accessible for all.

Emotional Support and Benefits

“It has been such a pleasure volunteering with LASSN, and I’ve really enjoyed my time with Faroogh – I’ve also learnt a lot from the experience myself. I’m really grateful for the opportunity.”*

Mali, English at Home volunteer

We strive to make volunteering with LASSN as enjoyable as possible and for volunteers to get out of volunteering as much as they put in. Many comment that a cultural exchange takes place, with volunteers saying they have learnt some words in the learner’s home language, discovered new things about the culture and even been taught delicious recipes! In terms of benefits, teachers have also advanced their skills and knowledge at the training sessions we offer as well as being able to receive references from us for employment and many going on to work in the sector. It was really encouraging to see 4 volunteers on the last training session who were previous tutors and had returned now that life circumstances had changed for them. This highlights the enjoyment and connection volunteers feel with LASSN.

Emotional Support and Benefits

We also acknowledge that at times it is difficult supporting someone in the asylum system, as the learner is very often dealing with a great deal of trauma both from the past and into the present. Due to this we offer support not just to the learner through referrals to professionals such as Solace, but also to tutors who are supporting them. This can be through the Mental Health Packs, an informal chat and offer of advice, to offering them sessions with a therapist if they feel the impact of vicarious trauma.

We also feel that it is important to celebrate the contribution that volunteers make and run an End of Year Celebration as a way of saying thank you for the hard work and dedication they have shown throughout the year in their role.



Level 1 Quality Mark in Volunteering

As our volunteers are so important to all that we do at LASSN, we want to recognise the time, skills, experience and joy they bring by supporting them as best as possible. For this reason, we successfully applied for the Level 1 Quality Mark in Volunteering awarded by Voluntary Action Leeds. To achieve this, we submitted a rigorous report about our volunteer policies, procedures and practices and were delighted to receive the following feedback.

“This is an exceptional submission. Volunteers are clearly valued as an integral part of the service, and this is reinforced by the level of support they receive, the expenses offered, the training, and induction. All appropriate procedures and systems are in place to effectively recruit and support volunteers.” **Andrina Dawson, Co-Ordinator for Volunteering, Voluntary Action Leeds**

4. Partnerships

Referral Organisations

At LASSN we recognise that we are part of a network of organisations in Leeds working together with refugees and asylum seekers. Below are a few case studies from organisations who refer to LASSN to state the impact of the project on the client they have referred.

“Since referring my SU to LASSN I have been impressed with the level of engagement and commitment given to him. My SU was quite unwell for a while and LASSN were accommodating to this and gave him space and time to heal so he could commit properly to his learning. His volunteer has been patient and kind and met at a convenient location. It has helped his language skills as well as with confidence building. He was attending Leeds City College prior to having a volunteer but was too poorly to continue with this. Having a volunteer who was adaptable made him be able to continue with his studies without feeling the pressure of going to college. LASSN have also provided social opportunities like the picnic, which encouraged him to get out and meet more people from the local community. His English has improved and so has his confidence. He has enjoyed the contact with his tutor and is keen to continue with his learning. Thank you. I will continue to refer people to your service for support.”

Liz Webber, Beacon Support Worker

4. Partnerships

Referral Organisations

"I referred a client to EaH project confident that they could offer the kind of help and support necessary for our young man who it has become clear was displaying characteristics consistent with an undiagnosed neurodiverse condition that was affecting his ability to communicate effectively and to navigate everyday situations. He was unable to manage mainstream learning at college but was desperate to learn the language and to improve his understanding of culture. He was matched with a tutor, and the relationship was incredibly positive." **Sharon Browne, Mental Health Support Worker, PAFRAS**

"Leeds City College has developed a mutually beneficial relationship with LASSN over the last few years, and this has supported many students to access education that they might otherwise not have been able to. Our work together mainly involves referrals either way as well as tours around our College facilities when students studying with LASSN may be ready to step into more formal education. This is a really important relationship which has had a huge impact, so we hope it continues to grow and serve our respective clients moving forwards." **Steve Thomas, Head for PDBA & ALS, School of Adult, Community & ESOL, Leeds City College**

4. Partnerships

Referral Organisations

"The service has given my client a way to learn English which is accessible, whilst they balanced their child-minding responsibilities." **Molly Griffin, Housing Support Worker, Engage**

"My client was struggling to learn English in a class environment because of her past traumatic experiences. Having a personal teacher has made a noticeable improvement to her confidence in communicating in English. She has also appreciated the friendly advice and mentoring that the teacher has given her." **Paul Wood, Solace Therapist**

"Alternative Home Schooling provided by LASSN is a valuable initiative and an essential aspect of our commitment to supporting our refugee clients. ESOL at Home offers hope to women who may feel overlooked or uncertain about their ability to learn, as they are often unable to attend college in person due to various reasons such as caring responsibilities for children or family members, health issues, or other significant barriers." **Abbas Mohammed, Resettlement Support Officer, Leeds City Council**

4. Partnerships

Referral Organisations

We pride ourselves in working in collaboration with many organisations in Leeds such as RETAS, PAFRAS and Leeds Refugee Forum plus those detailed below.

City of Sanctuary

We are a member of the Leeds City of Sanctuary Steering Group and regularly attend meetings with many individuals and organisations represented there in Leeds. This helps keep us connected with what is going on in the city and also form strong networks.

Leeds Voluntary Interpreter Service

We were involved in the creation of a multi-agency project, now managed by Manuel Bravo, called Leeds Voluntary Interpreter Service (LVIS), and continue to be on the steering group for the direction of the project. As part of the role as a partner, we have collaborated with Manuel Bravo and Solace to create a training session for volunteer interpreters involved with the service around the asylum system in the UK. We will be running this training with our partners in January.

4. Partnerships

Collaborator

University of Leeds



LASSN have worked in collaboration with the University of Leeds on a project for women from refugee and asylum seeker backgrounds to explore the University collections and campus and discover unexpected resonances between the art and design there and the visual cultures of their home countries. This has culminated in an exhibition in the Stanley and Audley Burton Gallery titled 'In Touch with Nature' created by the women who attended.

4. Partnerships

Collaborator

There were 9 sessions in total with 14 women attending, with comments such as *“it gave us amazing inspiration and brilliant ideas...as well as creating memories and a place to feel good.”* One of the women attending was also able to discuss options about attending University in the future.

As part of our connection with Leeds City of Sanctuary and The University of Leeds, we are part of a working group to assess if The University of Leeds is continuing to progress towards its commitments now that it has been made a University of Sanctuary. As part of this, we involved a former English at Home learner who organised the women on the above art project, to be part of these discussions.

By request from the School of Languages at the University of Leeds, we spoke with students about the work LASSN does so that they can share this with their peers. This means that we can raise our profile and support students in their studies, as quite a large percentage of our volunteers are students.

5. Community Activities

Picnic



This summer we hosted a picnic for anyone involved with LASSN to come along to and share food, games and conversation. Activities included face painting from The Kings Trust volunteers and Brazilian drumming. Between 80-100 people came throughout the afternoon, and it was wonderful to see people making friends, sharing food and having fun together. We chose a new location this year in South Leeds as we felt this was more accessible to a wider range of people.

5. Community Activities

Rugby

“Shauzia said that they all had a wonderful time at the rugby and the children were so excited to attend a real-life event. Thank you for making it possible.” **Jaynee, volunteer**



Leeds Rhinos donated 30 tickets to take LASSN clients to a rugby match. All the tickets were taken, and everyone had a brilliant time. For most, it was their first time in a stadium, one woman from Iran commenting that it was something she never dreamed of. It also raised aspirations, with children wanting to play and one of the women amazed to see a steward wearing a hijab, commenting *“she looks just like me and she is working here.”*

5. Community Activities

Refugee World Cup



We were involved again this year with Leeds Refugee Forum, Leeds United Foundation and Leeds City Council in organising and running the Refugee World Cup as part of Refugee Week. Over 30 teams came together in the sunshine to enjoy a great day. There was an all-gender tournament, open for anyone, and a separate women and non-binary competition to try and make it more inclusive for all. This is the second year this additional tournament has been implemented, with the number of teams entering it

increasing from 4 to 8. LASSN entered teams in both competitions and put up a great performance too! We also took the opportunity to have stalls at the event this year with Leeds City College, Leeds Anti Raids, PAFRAS, MESMAC and Yorkshire St Pauli all bringing materials to share and raise awareness of their services as well as providing food for all participants.

5. Community Activities

Five-a-side Football

LASSN run a five a side group which is open to all refugees and asylum seekers in Leeds. A number of LASSN clients attend, which helps with language learning, integration and is lots of fun.

Short Film Festival

During Refugee Week, LASSN were also able to run a short film festival. This was a great way to connect with people outside of the usual LASSN supporters and to showcase a range of short films around



migration and many of the difficulties people have faced. We were also able to invite a film maker who is part of the Leeds City of Sanctuary group to share her film and hold a Q&A about her experience of the asylum system. As a separate event, we were also able to show 'Who Killed Captain Alex?' as part of the African Cinema Month at the Hyde Park Picture House. We are developing the connection with them and will be looking to have more screenings to give a voice to minority groups and begin conversations.

5. Community Activities

LASSN's AGM

We always want to make sure that events at LASSN are as accessible to all as possible as well as enjoyable! Our AGM was a joyous occasion, with around 100 people attending sharing a meal together, listen to a presentation of a year in the life of LASSN and also watch a series of performances of world music, including an impromptu song in Arabic! Much like the picnic, these are a great opportunity for clients and volunteers alike to meet others involved with LASSN.



6. Issues, Learning and Next Steps

With regards to the number of people supported, a few factors have affected our capacity. A larger number of clients than expected have had very limited English and more complex issues. The English at Home Project is designed to support people in these positions, but it has meant more time invested in individuals and a longer period of support needed too. While we have worked hard to develop relationships with other organisations for signposting, many services have reduced capacity. This continues to pose a challenge. The creation of our Mental Health packs has been one response to this.

Throughout the total period of funding, we have had reduced staff capacity at times with one member of staff on parental leave and then on long term sick leave. This meant time given over to staff recruitment, interviews, and onboarding of new staff at the beginning of this year, affecting how many people we were able to support.

Recruitment and retention of volunteers have been cited nationally as being far lower across the charity sector in recent years. The EaH project has been successful at maintaining and retaining a consistent number of volunteers but this has been more challenging than before. In response to this, LASSN have created a Volunteers Recruitment and Retention strategy to manage risk around this.

6. Issues, Learning and Next Steps

Volunteer patterns are changing, and we are learning that often people are looking for more flexible shorter term roles. Thus, we are creating a number of micro volunteering roles at LASSN, which will increase the capacity of the project and allow people to volunteer in different ways. These have included creating new resources for the website, collection and delivery of technology for learners and speaking on behalf of LASSN at events.

We have also adapted some of our communication methods to help volunteers feel a greater sense of connection to LASSN. This has involved sending a monthly newsletter about all the projects rather than an individual project newsletter bi-monthly. Volunteers have commented it is a great way to know more about what is going on throughout the organisation.

To increase connection for volunteers, we will look to create 2 or 3 new Teach and Talk groups in different areas of the city, equipping them to become volunteer led and self sustaining, increasing peer support while giving more capacity to the Volunteer Managers. We will also continue with the 4 variations of the Skill Shares.

6. Issues, Learning and Next Steps

An issue, which has become increasingly worrying, is the rise of far-right politics and anti-immigration rhetoric, as can be shown in the riots last year and the use of the Union Jack to intimidate ethnic minorities. In response to this, staff have been on training about responding to the riots and also community cohesion and we shared details with volunteers. Staff have taken part in Active Bystander training, this will now be offered to volunteers. Looking ahead we are planning training on Islamophobia and racism, and the Right to Remain Toolkit. These issues have affected some of our practices, such as informing the local police before the LASSN picnic to avoid being targeted. We have also been more vigilant at checking on learners to make sure they are safe.

6. Issues, Learning and Next Steps

Professional Development

The continued professional development of the staff on English at Home is particularly important to us to expand our skills and knowledge. Over the reporting period we have completed the below sessions and will continue to identify training priorities going forward.

- Successful Funding Applications - NCVO
- Eritrea Information Session – IOM
- Afghanistan Information Session – IOM
- Syrian Information Session – IOM
- Responding to the Riots – Open-Source Arts
- Community Cohesion and the first 100 days of the New Government – Refugee Action
- Safeguarding on the Frontline – Safer Foundations

Names denoted with an * have been changed to protect the individual's identity.



Thank you so much for taking the time to read our report. If you have any questions, please email english@lassn.org.uk.