



**Annual Report**

**and**

**Financial Statements**

**for the year ended 31 March 2022**

**for**

**Slough Immigration Aid Unit**

funded by:



**BERKSHIRE  
COMMUNITY  
FOUNDATION**

**THE  
ACCESS  
TO JUSTICE  
FOUNDATION**



**Community Justice  
Fund**



**#OneSlough**



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**for the year ended 31 March 2022**

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Slough Immigration Aid Unit  
General Information  
for the year ended 31 March 2022

**CHARITY NAME:** Slough Immigration Aid Unit

**REGISTERED NUMBER:** 1064293

**ADDRESS:** 52 Chalvey High Street  
Slough  
Berkshire  
SL1 2SQ

**INDEPENDENT EXAMINER:** Ms P Grevett  
Grevett & Co  
Certified Accountants  
346a Farnham Road  
Slough  
Berkshire  
SL2 1BT

## **Slough Immigration Aid Unit**

### **Trustees' Report** **for the year ended 31 March 2022**

The Trustees of the Slough Immigration Aid Unit (also known as SIAU) present their Annual Report for the year ended 31 March 2022.

#### **Trustees**

Ms S M Shutter (Chair)  
Mr J R Barkley (Treasurer)  
Mrs M A Knibbs  
Ms P K Matharu  
Mr N A Rehman

The Trustees are appointed at Trustees' meetings. The Charity is governed by the Trust Deed dated 18 December 1996 as amended by Special Resolution on 15 August 1997.

#### **Objects**

The objects of the Charity are to relieve hardship by the provision of free legal advice, assistance and representation to people who live or work or study in Slough and neighbouring areas, and their families, who have difficulties caused by immigration, nationality or refugee law and practice and who cannot afford alternative representation and to collaborate with others to improve such advice for the people of Slough.

In addition other objects are to provide information and education on immigration, nationality and refugee law to those who are most closely affected by them.

This work is clearly for the public benefit, as required under charity law. The Trustees have had regard to the public benefit guidance published by the Charity Commission when exercising any powers or duties to which the guidance is relevant.

#### **Financial summary for the year**

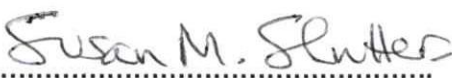
The Charity was funded through a restricted grant of £10,000 through the Access to Justice Foundation Community Justice Fund. This comprised £6,570 from the Ministry of Justice and £3,430 from Independent Funders. We spent the Ministry of Justice grant in this year and carried the Independent Funders grant forward to the 2022-2023 financial year. The Charity was also funded through unrestricted grants from the Berkshire Community Foundation, the Mactaggart Third Fund, and the London Legal Support Trust from our participation in its sponsored walk. The OneSlough funding, administered by Slough Council for Voluntary Service, for £4,000 per year to provide immigration advice to Slough residents, replacing SPACE, continued through the year.

We continue to seek further grant funding for our work, and to maintain our aim of having at least three months' running costs in reserves. The Charity is also funded by cost recovery fees from some clients who do not qualify for a free service and by donations from individuals.

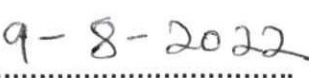
At the year end we held cash at bank of £17,342, which is represented by restricted funds of £3430 and the balance by unrestricted funds (including £6000 from the Mactaggart Third Fund for 2022-2023), held to meet the running costs of the Charity's office and related expenditure.

The Trustees declare that they have approved the trustees' report above.

#### **Signed on behalf of the charity's trustees**

  
.....

**Ms S M Shutter (Chair)**

  
.....

**Date**



## **SIAU's work during the year April 2021 to March 2022**

### **SIAU's work and aims**

SIAU is a charity which provides specialist legal advice, assistance and representation to people who live, work or study in Slough and neighbouring areas, and their families, who have difficulties with UK immigration, nationality or refugee law and practice. We have done this work for over 16 years.

We provide a free service to people on low incomes, or no income, and who would have qualified financially for Legal Help, when this still existed for immigration matters. Where people's income or savings are too high to qualify for Legal Help, we may operate a cost recovery process, charging a fee towards our costs only – we do not make a profit.

We work closely with other groups giving advice in Slough and provide information and support to them. For the past few years this was formalised through the Slough Community Network organised through Slough Council for Voluntary Service. This network is now called OneSlough. We have helped other voluntary and community organisations to understand the law and to help their members or refer them on. We have lobbied the Home Office for change and improvement in the law and practice.

This year our work largely continued in a hybrid way, because of the covid-19 pandemic. Since March 2000, the majority of our work has been done from home, through phone and email and zoom and post. We have got used to working in this way, and explaining to clients why they have to send scans and photos of documents by email to us in support of their cases, and provide information on-line for us to be able to advise. One member of staff has been working from abroad for much of the year. We have gone to the office every few weeks to collect and retrieve documents and to see those clients who are not able to use the internet, but most of our work has been done remotely. There were difficulties and advantages; we are beginning to plan for longer term.

### **Why our work is so important**

Immigration law is complex and can affect all aspects of people's lives. Access to competent immigration advice and representation can be vital, making the difference between, for example, a couple or family being able to live together in the UK or remain separated on different continents; an asylum seeker being recognised as a refugee or being refused and returned to danger; a grandmother being able to visit for her granddaughter's wedding or being refused a visa to come. It may enable people confused and worried by the EU Settlement Scheme to understand what they can do to secure their position; or elderly parents being able to live with their adult children here rather than left alone and in need of care abroad. The covid-19 pandemic has added another dimension of worry, with delays and changes at short notice, international travel restrictions and dangers.

Ignorance of the law can lead to serious and unnecessary difficulties. Not understanding the basis on which immigration decisions are made, or the importance of using the right forms and providing all the right documentation to the Home Office or to British Visa Application Centres abroad at the right time, can result in applications which could meet the requirements of the immigration rules being refused. The fees for immigration applications were raised in April 2022, now £2404 for settlement as a spouse or partner, £1048 for family extension of stay, £1538 for family entry clearance abroad, making the importance of preparing a case well and getting the application right first time of huge significance. Since April 2015, immigration applicants also have to pay a 'health surcharge,' which rose from £400 to £624 per year in October 2020, for access to the NHS, for which most of them will already be paying through their taxes.

When immigration problems can be solved, people are able to continue their lives in a normal way. Uncertainty about immigration status can cause poverty and exploitation. People who have at last been allowed to work and thus to support their family will be able to do so, and will have the security not to be exploited at work and to be able to access other rights. The basic security for people knowing that they are able to remain with their family and continue in their life enhances community cohesion and makes for a more unified and stronger society.



SIAU remains the only source of free specialist immigration and nationality law advice based in Slough. Such work is much needed in Slough; around half of its population is of minority ethnic origin, with the largest communities from Kashmir and the Punjab, but there are also significant African, East European, other Asian and Middle Eastern populations, as well as those from the Caribbean. There remains a large unmet need for immigration advice, information and representation.

### **Changes in the law**

Parliamentary debate on migration was dominated by the Nationality and Borders Bill, starting with its second reading on 19 July 2021 until its enactment on 28 April 2022. Rightly, the proposals to send asylum seekers to Rwanda to be processed and to deprive people of their British nationality without informing them received most hostile comment, but there are positive provisions on nationality, enabling people to register to become British citizens without charge if historical injustice in the previous laws meant they were not born British. There were eight separate Statements of Changes in the immigration rules from April 2021 to March 2022, including several further changes to the post-Brexit EU Settlement Scheme, and to the points-based system on routes to work in the UK and to the schemes for British nationals (overseas) from Hong Kong and for people from Ukraine, as well as changes following on the Law Commission's 2020 proposals and further codification of the rules on families and human rights. There were five Supreme Court decisions relating to immigration, asylum or nationality matters, including on children's citizenship applications and benefits entitlements in connection with the EU Settlement Scheme.

The rules on family migration remain extremely complex and restrictive, and many people are still unable to meet them as they do not earn the £18,600 per year required to be able to maintain their spouse, or cannot provide the very precise evidence demanded. The financial difficulties caused by the long-term effects of the pandemic have meant fewer people can qualify, and the Home Office's covid-19 concessions have not covered all issues. In the UK, it has meant an increase in family members who cannot meet the financial requirement getting permission to stay on the ten year route to settlement, meaning they will not have a secure "settled" status in the UK for ten years. More people have needed to apply for their immigration fees to be waived, and for their conditions restricting access to public funds to be amended. These applications are labour-intensive, as the Home Office requires very detailed financial evidence and explanations.

The 'hostile environment' created for people without immigration rights, officially renamed the 'compliant environment' by Sajid Javid when Home Secretary, continues and affects others who have the right to remain. The most extreme injustice affected many from the 'Windrush generation' – with people still fighting for slow and inadequate compensation. It is clear that a similar situation may arise in future for those who do not apply under the EU Settlement Scheme, for whatever reason, as late applications are continuing. The reaction to the situation in Afghanistan from August 2021 and Ukraine from February 2022 has drained resources from other immigration areas so that family human rights applications are now taking 11 months on average to process. The government's continued use of outsourcing to private sector providers to operate the immigration system, TLS Contact and VFS Global abroad, Sopra Steria in the UK, makes the processes less transparent and harder to deal with, and it is more difficult to find out where responsibility for problems caused to individual applicants lies.

SIAU helps people to understand the immigration law and rules and how to satisfy the authorities that they can qualify, or advises them how they can do so, but also explains when they do not. SIAU's work empowers people by helping them to be aware of their position under immigration law and to access their rights and by reducing the need for people to pay often expensive and incompetent consultants.

British nationality law is complicated and people often need help in understanding it, collecting the documents needed and making their applications to become British citizens. Naturalisation is always discretionary and the Home Office changes its criteria for using its discretion without publicity. Again, the naturalisation fee of £1330 is non-refundable if the application is refused. SIAU's specialist workers are able to help people through this maze. We lobbied through ILPA on the nationality sections of the Nationality and Borders Bill, being debated in Parliament through 2021 and 2022, and have advised people on applying under the sections aimed at rectifying historical injustices.



## **SIAU's advice work and casework**

Our legal advice and representational work through the year continued. Our work is regulated by the Office of the Immigration Services Commissioner, no. F200500137. OISC most recently audited SIAU's work in May 2016 and was fully satisfied.

During the year April 2021 – March 2022, SIAU records show we advised 417 people and families and took up 73 new cases to represent to the immigration authorities, with work continuing on many others. Our records show that the people we advised were of 83 different nationalities - the largest numbers were again Pakistani (81) and Indian (45), but there were 119 from different African countries and 13 from the Caribbean. There were 52 inquiries from citizens of 19 other EEA countries this year, often those of minority ethnic descent; the largest numbers were Italian (10), Romanian (7) and Polish (6). Other nationalities include Nigerian (21), Ghanaian (16), Afghan (11), Kenyan and Sri Lankan (10 each), and fewer than 10 people from each of the other nationalities.

Many inquiries, 65, related to the EU Settlement Scheme, including 34 about acquiring permanent residence, 11 about pre-settled status, many including non-EU national family members, 11 about EU SS family permit entry clearance. Many inquiries related to establishing or acquiring British citizenship, 30 in relation to adult naturalisation, 24 in relation to children, either registering as British or establishing the status of children born here. The majority of the other issues raised were in relation to family matters, 87 about spouses, partners and children in the UK, 37 about entry clearance for spouses, partners and children currently abroad. 7 inquiries related to other dependent relatives. 56 related to marriage breakdown and domestic violence and the immigration law effects of escaping a violent partnership or the possibility of qualifying to remain in the UK independently. 11 were related to asylum or discretionary leave matters. 17 people inquired about qualifying to remain on long residence grounds. 24 people needed advice or help about their entitlement to benefits, or in trying to change the conditions on their stay that they cannot have recourse to public funds, and 29 about applying to waive the Home Office application fees and the immigration health surcharge. Other matters included people wanting advice about family members coming to visit from abroad, and matters such as NHS charges, proving the right to work or to claim benefits and obtaining travel documents and biometric residence permits.

In relation to the 73 people and families whose cases we represented, they were of 25 different nationalities; the largest numbers were Pakistani (24) and Indian (11), Nigerian (5), Kenyan (4) Ghanaian and Zimbabwean (3 each). Many couples and families have more than one nationality between them, and non-EU nationals married to, or children of, EU nationals, may have most difficulty in establishing their EU SS status; we represented 7 such cases. Others included permission to remain with settled or British spouses (7) or parents of such children (8) or entry clearance to join family (5), applying to remain after experiencing domestic abuse (25), long residence applications (6), applying for change of conditions on stay, to be able to access public funds (4) and applying for British citizenship (5). We represented nine people in successfully obtaining fee waivers for their applications.

The majority of people we advised and helped were local. 209 came from Slough, 30 from High Wycombe, 24 from Maidenhead, 24 from Bracknell, 11 from Reading, 13 from Windsor, others from a bit further afield, such as Wokingham, Amersham, Surrey, Buckinghamshire, and west London, and a few from other areas, usually by email or phone. 49 people self-identified as having a person with a disability in the family, ranging from mobility difficulties to mental health issues, autism, HIV+, suffering heart attacks or stroke, or had a medical condition such as cancer or heart failure.

### **A family we helped**

*Mrs TM contacted SIAU at the end of her tether, after enduring years of abuse from her partner, the father of her four children. The last straw was him claiming that their youngest child was not his, and presenting her with alleged DNA evidence to show this. He had refused to apply for an extension of her permission to remain as his partner, making her into an overstayer and even more dependent on him as she was no longer permitted to work. She was desperate to escape from this control. SIAU explained that she could apply for the Destitution – Domestic Violence concessionary three months permission to remain, with eligibility to claim benefits, so she could leave her partner's home and get support for herself and the children. We obtained evidence of the abuse that had continued through the years, from the police and from her GP. We looked at the claimed DNA evidence and showed the flaws in it, and that it was not from a company recognised by the UK government, so she was reassured that it was not real. We then applied to the Home Office for indefinite leave to remain for her and it was granted in only three weeks, as the ordeals she had suffered were so clear. She and her children have been able to make a new life in safety.*



SIAU's staff are highly skilled and experienced and their expertise can make a significant difference to chances of success in an application. Shabana Bokhari, OISC level 3 regulated, has continued to work for one day a week for most of this year; Parveen Akhter, OISC Level 2 regulated, worked four days a week from February 2021, and temporarily full-time from March 2022. Shabana was away in Pakistan for personal reasons for many months; she has been able to work remotely from there. Sue Shutter, level 2 regulated, volunteered more frequently, dealing with advice queries and some casework from home. We have not been able to support admin volunteers but Meghan Curran, Nazia Shabir and Amina Akhter have provided some volunteer casework support, supervised by Parveen Akhter. There is a huge demand for our work, which we have continued remotely, through email and phone, through the remainder of this year.

SIAU continues to work with and receive referrals from other local organisations and community groups doing complementary work in Slough and the surrounding area, including Citizens Advice East Berkshire, working in Slough since October 2021, Slough Refugee Support, Hestia, SEWAK refuge, The Dash Charity (Domestic Abuse Stops Here), Slough Foodbank, neighbouring Citizens Advice Bureaux and others. The council, Slough Children's Services Trust, and the Slough MP's office, as well as community groups, may also refer people to us for help and advice. We continue to be a member of the OneSlough (formerly SPACE) consortium of voluntary organisations funded by Slough council through Slough Council for Voluntary Service, to deliver advice and social support in Slough. We participate in their regular zoom meetings set up for groups to remain in contact during covid-19 lockdowns. As an OISC-regulated organisation, we hold their Slough Quality Protects Platinum level accreditation.

### **SIAU's information and lobbying work**

SIAU has participated in lobbying on the Nationality and Borders Bill through our membership of the Immigration Law Practitioners' Association. We responded to the government's New Plan for Immigration document in April 2021 and have continued to comment on changes. We participate in on-line discussion groups of immigration advisers and lawyers sharing ideas and information.

SIAU expects to continue all our areas of work into the future, as we anticipate the need for it will remain and increase as more parts of the new immigration system and the Nationality and Borders Act comes into effect. The EU settlement and pre-settlement scheme and its June 2021 deadline, and people travelling in small boats across the English Channel and the Mediterranean and the Rwanda proposal keep migration in the forefront of public debate. We continue to advise many EU nationals and their families worried about their status, or applying late, along with others having difficulties caused by the family migration rules. The greater incidence of domestic abuse during covid-19 led to an increase in our casework in this area. Restrictions on eligibility to claim benefits, and the level of the Home Office fees have added to difficulties this year, and fee waivers and change of conditions applications are an increasing proportion of our work. The restrictions on our working because of covid-19 and the need to work remotely, and to rely on email, internet, phone and post, and the difficulties in meeting people, add to the complications of our work. We continue to attempt to mitigate some of the worst effects of the laws and practice for our clients and their families and to help them to achieve their aims.

### **SIAU's staff**

Parveen Akhter, Shabana Bokhari

### **SIAU's volunteers**

Amina Akhter (from November 2021), Meghan Curran (to September 2021)  
Nazia Shabir (from October 2021), Sue Shutter

### **SIAU's Trustees**

Sue Shutter (chair), Ray Barkley (treasurer), Mai Knibbs, Parvinder Matharu, Nisar Rehman



**Slough Immigration Aid Unit**

**Independent Examiner's Report**  
**to the trustees of Slough Immigration Aid Unit**

I report on the accounts of Slough Immigration Aid Unit for the year ended 31 March 2022, which are set out on pages 10 and 11.

**Respective responsibilities of trustees and examiner**

The charity's trustees are responsible for the preparation of the accounts. The charity's trustees consider that an audit is not required for this year under section 144(2) of the Charities Act 2011 (the 2011 Act) and that an independent examination is needed.

It is my responsibility to:

- 1\* examine the accounts under section 145 of the 2011 Act
- 2\* to follow the procedures laid down in the general Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the 2011 Act
- 3\* to state whether particular matters have come to my attention

**Basis of independent examiner's report**

My examination was carried out in accordance with the general Directions given by the Charity Commission. An examination includes a review of the accounting records kept by the charity and a comparison of the accounts presented with those records. It also includes consideration of any unusual items or disclosures in the accounts, and seeking explanations from you as trustees concerning any such matters. The procedures undertaken do not provide all the evidence that would be required in an audit and consequently no opinion is given as to whether the accounts present a 'true and fair view' and the report is limited to those matters set out in the next statement.

**Independent examiner's statement**

In connection with my examination, no matter has come to my attention:

- (1) which gives me reasonable cause to believe that in any material respect the requirements:

- \* to keep accounting records in accordance with section 130 of the 2011 Act and
- \* to prepare accounts which accord with the accounting records and comply with the requirements of the 2011 Act

have not been met or

- (2) to which, in my opinion, attention should be drawn in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.



Ms P Grevett FCCA

15/8/22

Date

**Slough Immigration Aid Unit**

**Income and Expenditure Account**  
**for the year ended 31 March 2022**

	Unrestricted funds £	Restricted funds £	2022 Total funds £	Unrestricted funds £	Restricted funds £	2021 Total funds £
<b>Income</b>						
Grants	13,624	10,000	23,624	19,370	15,190	34,560
Donations	5,266	-	5,266	1,069	-	1,069
Fees recovered	5,235	-	5,235	6,175	-	6,175
	<b>24,125</b>	<b>10,000</b>	<b>34,125</b>	<b>26,614</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>41,804</b>
<b>Other income</b>						
Deposit account interest	10	-	10	3	-	3
	<b>10</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Total income</b>	<b>24,135</b>	<b>10,000</b>	<b>34,135</b>	<b>26,617</b>	<b>15,190</b>	<b>41,807</b>
<b>Expenditure</b>						
Rent	5,040	-	5,040	5,040	-	5,040
Wages	19,530	6,570	26,100	7,309	13,036	20,345
Cloud based data system & training	480	-	480	-	2,154	2,154
Course fees & books	-	-	-	-	-	-
Telephone & internet	1,530	-	1,530	1,469	-	1,469
Post & stationery	972	-	972	637	-	637
Travelling	-	-	-	-	-	-
Professional indemnity insurance	231	-	231	203	-	203
Employers liability insurance	165	-	165	160	-	160
Sundry expenses	385	-	385	228	-	228
Accountancy	1,000	-	1,000	1,000	-	1,000
Membership fees	435	-	435	270	-	270
Professional fees	1,290	-	1,290	1,290	-	1,290
Bank charges	73	-	73	72	-	72
Nest pension	288	-	288	260	-	260
	<b>31,419</b>	<b>6,570</b>	<b>37,989</b>	<b>17,938</b>	<b>15,190</b>	<b>33,128</b>
<b>NET INCOME</b>	<b>-7,284</b>	<b>3,430</b>	<b>-3,854</b>	<b>8,679</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>8,679</b>
<b>Reconciliation of funds</b>						
Total funds brought forward	22,348	-	22,348	13,669	-	13,669
Total funds carried forward	15,064	3430	18,494	22,348	-	22,348



**Slough Immigration Aid Unit**

**Balance Sheet**  
**for the year ended 31 March 2022**

	2022		2021
	£	£	£
<b>FIXED ASSETS</b>			
Computer equipment		1,710	1,710
<b>CURRENT ASSETS</b>			
Debtors	920		210
Prepayments	150		150
Bank deposit account	13,989		18,728
Bank account no. 1	1,071		902
Bank account no. 2	2,282		4,275
Cash in hand	-		-
	<u>18,412</u>		<u>24,265</u>
<b>CURRENT LIABILITIES</b>			
Creditors and accrued expenses	<u>1,628</u>		<u>3,627</u>
<b>NET CURRENT ASSETS</b>		16,784	20,638
<b>NET ASSETS</b>		<u><u>18,494</u></u>	<u><u>22,348</u></u>
<b>REPRESENTED BY:</b>			
Restricted funds	3,430		-
Unrestricted funds	15,064		22,348
	<u><u>18,494</u></u>		<u><u>22,348</u></u>