

# MERSEYSIDE REFUGEE SUPPORT NETWORK

## ANNUAL REPORT & ACCOUNTS TO 31ST MARCH 2022

St Anne's Centre  
7, Overbury Street  
Liverpool  
L7 3HJ

0151-709-7557

[info@mrsnliverpool.org.uk](mailto:info@mrsnliverpool.org.uk)

[www.mrsnliverpool.org.uk](http://www.mrsnliverpool.org.uk)



Registered Charity No 1093033

Liverpool City of  
Sanctuary



## CONTENTS

GOVERNANCE .....	3
THE TEAM - SESSIONAL & SUPPORT COLLEAGUES AND VOLUNTEERS: .....	3
MEMBERSHIP POLICY .....	4
TRUSTEES' REPORT APRIL 2021-MARCH 2022 .....	5
Reserves Policy Statement.....	9
RECEIPT AND PAYMENT ACCOUNTS 2021-2022 .....	10

## GOVERNANCE

The following have served the Network as Trustees during the year:

- Carmel Dersch (Independent)
- Harriet Gray (Independent)
- Lynn Learman (Independent) - *Treasurer*
- Jan Luff (Independent) - *Chair*
- Nick McLaughlin – South Liverpool CAB
- Ewan Roberts (Asylum Link Merseyside)
- Helene Santamera (Independent)
- Shelah Semoff (Independent)
- Mohammed Taher (Independent)

### THE TEAM - SESSIONAL & SUPPORT COLLEAGUES AND VOLUNTEERS:

- S. Roberts – MRSN Manager
- M. McAdam – MRSN Senior Refugee Advocacy Officer (*retired 30/09/2021*)
- A. Ahmed – MRSN Refugee Advocacy Officer

Thanks to the numerous and talented volunteers who have supported our work from April 2021-March 2022 and ongoing, in particular:

Abdulrahman; Maryam; Ashkan; Selam; Ehsan; Di; Jan; Mike, Gill and Jen.

## MEMBERSHIP POLICY

The Network seeks to establish, through its Membership Policy, two principles. The first is that the Network has to remain firmly in the ownership of voluntary organisations. The second is that we have benefited enormously and intend to continue doing so from the involvement of public and private sector partners.

Membership of the Network represents your good will and intention to support the work of the charity and its members and membership organisations through the principles of partnership working, shared learning and expertise and information sharing.

Full membership is open to any interested organisation or individual making an application to the Network and whose application is accepted.

Full members are able to vote at meetings and to nominate a person to stand for election as a Trustee.

## TRUSTEES' REPORT APRIL 2021-MARCH 2022

This annual report and accounts for the financial year 2021-22 captures how our work has continued and developed over the last year and, in celebration of the Charity's 20<sup>th</sup> year of supporting refugees and other sanctuary seekers in the Liverpool City Region and beyond. Moreover, it represents the continuing benefits of the Network and support for the member organisations of the local refugee and asylum support sector.

Since the previous AGM, we have emerged from the constraints of the various Covid-19 lockdowns and have regained a sense of normal working.

Each year, our annual report presents an important opportunity to reflect on the past financial year and as a means to assess how the charity has continued to work to meet its core charitable aims and objectives, as required by the Charity Commission. We had another busy year, which has been very productive enabling us to offer more refugee casework sessions along with our projects to support health & wellbeing and employability support projects. In addition, we have also increased staff and volunteer teams as well as strengthening the charity and its sustainability.

### Context

The overall aim of Merseyside Refugee Support Network (MRSN) includes *"the relief of refugees or asylum seekers in Merseyside.."* and, as a Network, to bring together local and regional organisations concerned with their welfare, to share information and good practice, discuss and address issues across the sector.

In meeting our aims, we provide a combination of networking and information sharing services, supported through the email newsgroup, directories of refugee and asylum support agencies and, in normal times, regular Network meetings.

Over the past 17 years, we have also offered "relief" through casework support with refugee clients moving-on from the asylum support system. The biggest need is met through our advocacy casework to help clients access and cope with the mainstream benefits and housing systems, as well as other integration matters such as employment support, education, language support and health services.

The shared asylum/refugee "sanctuary hub" at St Anne's continues to enable MRSN to work in close partnership and provide reciprocal asylum and refugee client support and signposting in a very effective way with colleagues from Asylum Link Merseyside (ALM) and Greater Manchester Immigration Aid Unit (GMIAU).

As ever, we continue to maintain and develop our close working relationships with Network Members to

MRSN Report & Accounts 2021-2022

collectively help and support our vulnerable refugee and asylum-seeking clients, as well as each other. During the past year, these relationships have continued to develop and have been enhanced as the need for cross-agency working and complex casework continues to increase in our post-pandemic working world.

We are delighted in this context to present our 20<sup>th</sup> Annual Report, as we celebrate our Charity's formal 20<sup>th</sup> birthday during 2022.

As per previous reports, the numbers of people fleeing war and persecution and seeking sanctuary across UK and Europe has not abated and our service is constantly trying to keep resources in place to help new refugees when they are granted leave to remain and, in the years beyond, to support their onward integration journey. It cannot go unsaid that politically the landscape has continued to develop a deliberate "hostile environment".

Our work to raise awareness and understanding, therefore, also continues through our daily advocacy work, regular information sharing, networking and connecting people. Our *Fact Not Fiction* publication has been updated again and helps in this process, alongside our work to support Schools of Sanctuary. During the year, we have advised on bids from the Local Authority and Liverpool Museums in their applications for thematic Sanctuary status and, we continue to administer the Liverpool City of Sanctuary group.

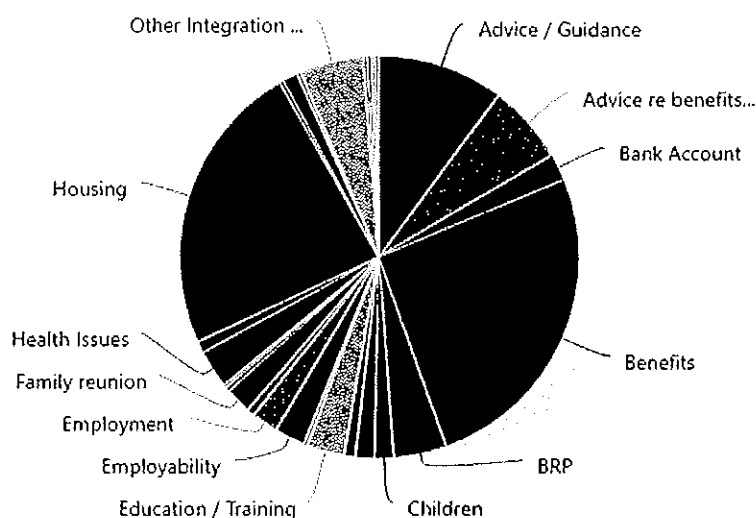
By summer 2021, the plight of the Afghan people very much brought the spotlight back to the reasons people flee their homelands, little did we know then that war would start in Ukraine in February 2022 following the Russian invasion. By March 2022, we were supporting some of the first Ukrainian refugees in Liverpool.

## **Our Work**

On an annual basis, and resource dependent, MRSN has traditionally worked with between 350-500 individual refugees and their families. Although numbers dipped due to the impact of the pandemic in asylum decisions, during 2021-22 our numbers were back up to 330 clients on caseload and a further 159 one-off advice/information or support appointments.

Our core casework included crisis support; applications and follow up on benefits; housing referrals and applications; family reunion arrival and integration support; DV client support; homelessness support; reporting of unfit housing conditions and/or referral to counselling and health services and initiatives.

This work has been sustained thanks to grants from Lloyds Bank Foundation; Allen Lane Foundation and PH Holt Foundation.



In addition, our European Social Fund (ESF) work has also focussed on building skills and confidence to help clients understand their rights and entitlements, to remove barriers to employment through job seeking skills, digital literacy and language support. In the last ever round of ESF funding we were delighted to deliver our employability project offering volunteer tasters and placements to clients, resulting in both job and long term volunteer outcomes.

Health and health-awareness projects have also been an important part of our work in the past couple of years. Our Covid Champions public health work, delivered in partnership with ALM, has enabled hundreds of clients to understand and access vaccines and boosters over the past year, as well as general health and mental health awareness. Going forward, the good practice learned from this project has led to a much broader health and wellbeing community based programme. It is well documented that poor health and poverty are inextricably linked, we have no doubt that our work to improve health awareness and access to health services will continue.

During the year, we jointly worked with Asylum Link and Faiths 4 Change and other Liverpool partners on a Liverpool CCG regional funded Diabetes Partnership project on Diabetes Awareness. Certain major health issues, such as diabetes and stroke are known to significantly affect people from Black and other ethnic minority communities at an earlier age. Our research and awareness sessions allowed us to share with over 40 participants the issues contributing to risk of diabetes, how to mitigate against them by seeking medical support and through life style and dietary changes. In a separate connection with the Stroke Association our advice for good practice on communications with people whose first language is not English has been adopted nationally.

Our work has been extended and enhanced through various grants and donations which often span accounting years. In addition to those funders named above, we had the amazing additional support of various local and national funders including: Support Asylum Seekers (SAS)/Churches Together in Merseyside and the Barrow Cadbury Trust.

Together with existing funds and programmes we were able to:

- offer additional staff and volunteer hours to meet the service demand for refugee advocacy casework and health and wellbeing projects.
- provide emergency cash grants and vouchers (via SAS and Crisis), food supplies and clothing (via ALM), carpets/curtains/sportswear (via Crisis) – approx. total combined value of £10k.
- continue to support clients with integration and employability skills
- provide insight into refugee community access to health services and Covid support
- develop our data monitoring systems
- develop our website [www.mrsnliverpool.org.uk](http://www.mrsnliverpool.org.uk)
- regularly share information across the Network with Members and City of Sanctuary partner (n=500 recipients)
- respond to wider calls for client support, information and advice locally, regionally and nationally (n=143 outside agency/organisation requests)

We continue to work hard as an organisation and Network - to highlight the ongoing need to change hearts and minds and address media myth and hype. We have also helped different refugee diaspora communities reaching out for help, as well as helping to connect statutory services to various refugee cultural communities, including EMTAS and Merseyside Police.

Our combined advocacy casework, wellbeing, integration and refugee community support services and projects are not limited in time or scope. We work with clients until they feel able or empowered to move-on themselves.

Widening our reach and maintaining partnership arrangements is crucial in the support work we offer to both clients and sector colleagues alike. Although many across the local refugee and asylum support sector were remote working for long periods of time, it often felt as if we had found new ways of supporting each other and checking-in on each other more than ever before and long may that continue.

The trustees meet as a minimum on a quarterly basis to oversee the governance and administration of the Charity and to discuss and respond to matters of urgent concern that are directly affecting refugees and asylum seekers.

We now have resources in place to take forward the work to incorporate the charity as soon as possible.

All of our work fulfils our charitable objectives and once again we are so grateful to our grant funders, donors, supporters and Network Members who trust in our work, our experience and ethics.

The summary "Receipt and Payment" accounts at page 10 have been approved through external and independent examination and are attached with this Annual Report.



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## RESERVES POLICY STATEMENT

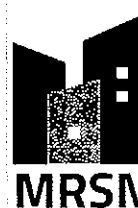
Reserves are unrestricted funds that are freely available to spend in relation to the charity's purposes. At MRSN we build up reserves through donations, training, events and other income or grants which are received, without restriction. These funds have been recorded as "general funds – unrestricted" within our accounts summary.

The receipts and payment accounts which are prepared for the annual return to the Charity Commission show all income received and whether this is restricted per funder or unrestricted donations and income in each financial year.

Unrestricted reserves may contribute to the future sustainability of the charity, although these will not be built up to excessive levels, it is our intention, in line with good practice and governance to achieve 3-6 months equivalent in running costs.

This policy and its effectiveness will be reviewed and developed on an annual basis.

**MERSEYSIDE REFUGEE SUPPORT NETWORK**  
**Receipts and Payments Accounts 2021-22**  
**Year ending 31st March 2022**

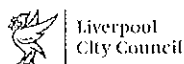


#	Project	Income/Funder/Donor	£ B/F	£ Income	£ Exp	£ Balance
<b>Unrestricted Funds/Donations</b>						
1	General Funds	MISC	17,368.46	35,203.00	-2,042.87	50,528.59
	Inc. Diabetes Awareness/LCCG					
	Inc. Lloyds Bank Foundation					
		<b>Sub Total:</b>	<b>17,368.46</b>	<b>35,203.00</b>	<b>-2,042.87</b>	<b>50,528.59</b>
<b>Restricted Funds/Grants</b>						
7	NEW SAS client support	SAS	1,025.00	4,700.00	-4,530.00	1,195.00
8	NEW ERASMUS - CREATE OPPORTUNITIES	ERASMUS + (Bialystok)	6,282.65	0.00	-6,282.65	0.00
9	TRANSFER CoS RESIDUAL GRANT	CoS Central	125.59	0.00	-125.59	0.00
10	NEW ESF 19/20	ESF/WEA	-69.56	7,900.00	-7,830.44	0.00
11	TRANSFER L'POOL WELCOMES RESIDUAL FUND	MRSN	99.19	0.00	-99.19	0.00
12	ALLEN LANE FOUNDATION	ALLEN LANE	4,490.50	0.00	-4,490.50	0.00
13	PH HOLT	PH HOLT	2,658.50	0.00	-2,658.50	0.00
15	ALM/Our Liverpool	ALM	2,800.00	0.00	-3,050.50	-250.50
17	BARROW CADBURY - Covid support	Barrow Cadbury/Covid	1,004.02	100.00	-1,104.02	0.00
18	LCC Covid Community Champions	LCC	0.00	25,000.00	-20,534.05	4,465.95
19	WEA ESF 22	ESF/WEA	0.00	2,983.00	-4,959.00	-1,976.00
		<b>Sub Total:</b>	<b>18,415.89</b>	<b>40,683.00</b>	<b>-55,664.44</b>	<b>3,434.45</b>
	<b>Balances Per Bank Statement to:31.03.2022</b>	<b>£</b>	<b>35,784.35</b>	<b>75,886.00</b>	<b>-57,707.31</b>	<b>53,963.04</b>

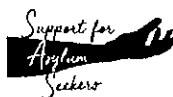
I have examined these accounts and they are consistent with the books and records kept by Merseyside Refugee Support Network

Signed:

Date: 23/01/2023



European Union  
European  
Social Fund



Erasmus+

APPROVED BY MRSN TRUSTEES ON: 27/01/2023