

# MERSEYSIDE REFUGEE SUPPORT NETWORK

## ANNUAL REPORT & ACCOUNTS TO 31ST MARCH 2023



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Registered Charity No 1093033

Liverpool City of  
Sanctuary



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## GOVERNANCE

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

- Carmel Dersch (Independent)
- Harriet Gray (Independent) - *Chair*
- Jan Luff (Independent) - *Treasurer*
- 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
- A. Ahmed – MRSN Refugee Advocacy Officer
- M. Lucas – MRSN Support Worker

Thanks to the numerous and talented volunteers who have supported our work from April 2022-March 2023 and ongoing, in particular:

Abdulrahman; Maryam; Ashkan; Ehsan; Clare; Mike H, Gill and Jen.

## MEMBERSHIP POLICY

The Network seeks to establish, through its Membership Policy, two principles. The first is that the Network supports the local refugee and asylum support sector members and wider network partners in order to support the needs of our collective service users. The second is that we continue to work in partnership with the public and private sector partners to support the accessibility for service users to their provision, where appropriate.

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, 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 2022-MARCH 2023

This annual report and accounts for the financial year 2022-23 captures how our work has continued and developed over the last year and, in celebration of the Charity's 21st 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.

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 working 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 18+ 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 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 and "hostile environment" working world.

We are delighted in this context to present our 21<sup>st</sup> Annual Report, as we celebrate our Charity's formal 21<sup>st</sup> birthday during 2023.

As per previous reports, the numbers of people fleeing war and persecution and seeking sanctuary across the 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.

The *Facts Not Fiction* publication was again updated following the terrible incidents at the Suites Hotel in Knowsley and followed up with a poster campaign and awareness raising videos, kindly funded through the office of the Merseyside Police and Crime Commissioner and Liverpool Council.

We continue to also service the Liverpool City of Sanctuary group communications and the amazing work within the Schools of Sanctuary in Liverpool and the wider LCR. During the year, we have also advised on bids from the Local Authority and Liverpool Museums in their applications for thematic Sanctuary status.

## **Our Work**

During 2022-23 our casework continued to grow, now in excess of 370 clients pa and a further 200+ one-off advice/information appointments. Key nationalities in the 22-23 period were from Sudan; Yemen; Kuwait; Iran; Eritrea; Ukraine; Afghanistan.

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 projects to support health and wellbeing and initiatives to improve awareness of public health.

The overall work has been sustained thanks to grants from Lloyds Bank Foundation and other related project specific funding with health and wellbeing projects funded via former LCCG and LCC-Community Champions and employability and volunteering projects funded through the last of European Social Funding.

The extension to our European Social Fund (ESF) work enabled us to offer additional project capacity to help build skills and confidence, to remove barriers to employment through job seeking skills and volunteer tasters and placements to clients, resulting in both job and long term volunteer outcomes.

Health & wellbeing and health-awareness projects have continued to be an important part of our work in the refugee communities.

Our Covid Champions and other health work, delivered in partnership with ALM, has enabled many hundreds of clients to understand and access covid and childhood immunisation vaccines over the past year, as well as general health, diabetes, cancer/mental health awareness. This work is set to continue to Spring 2024.

Our advocacy and support 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 a funding donation from the Catherine Cirket Discretionary Trust (CCDT) and Support Asylum Seekers (SAS Fund) via Churches Together in Merseyside (CTMR). The donation from CCDT was given in good faith to support and sustain our core refugee support work and we will honour this through assigning it as a designated fund within our accounts. The SAS fund enables us to provide ad hoc emergency and crisis cash support to clients in need and/or destitute – eg prior to benefits going into payment or when a significant change comes into effect.

Together with existing funds and programmes we were able to:

- offer additional staff and volunteer hours to meet the ongoing increasing demand for refugee advocacy casework
- provide emergency cash grants and vouchers (via SAS/CTMR), food supplies and clothing (via ALM).
- 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
- 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=263 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

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.

The MRSN 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, as previously discussed.

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.



## RESERVES POLICY STATEMENT

The Trustees recognise that the MRSN reserves should be used appropriately and with due diligence to maintain the sustainability of the charity.

Some reserves are deemed to be “unrestricted” and used for general purposes in delivery of the work of the charity, governance costs and other compliance expenditure (such as insurances, official registration costs etc), including 4-6 month buffer to meet financial commitments and obligations and/or contracts should the charity decide to close.

Certain donations and grants have been specifically assigned as “designated project funds” to ensure service delivery for casework and Network functions, in the spirit of the grants or donations given.

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, unrestricted donations and income or designated funds for the financial year.

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

# RECEIPT AND PAYMENT ACCOUNTS 2022-2023

## MERSEYSIDE REFUGEE SUPPORT NETWORK

### Receipts and Payments Accounts 2022-2: HSBC ACCOUNT Year ending 31st March 2023



#	Project	Income/Funder/Donor	£ B/F	£ Income	£ Exp	£ Balance
	<b>Unrestricted Reserves/Donations</b>					
1	General - unrestricted/non designated	VARIOUS	50,528.59	1,447.50	-8,644.35	43,331.74
	<b>Designated Funds</b>					
1a	General - designated project funds					
	<i>inc. Lloyds Bank Foundation yr2, inc. C Cerkett Trust</i>	VARIOUS	0.00	37,250.00	-1,149.50	36,100.50
		<b>Sub Total:</b>	<b>50,528.59</b>	<b>38,697.50</b>	<b>-9,793.85</b>	<b>79,432.24</b>
	<b>Restricted Funds/Grants</b>					
7	NEW_SAS client support	SAS	1,195.00	4,320.00	-1,840.00	3,675.00
15	ALM/Our Liverpool	ALM	-250.50	1,400.00	-1,149.50	0.00
18	LCC Community Champions	LCC	4,465.95	25,000.00	-25,011.43	4,454.52
19	WEA_ESF 22	ESF/WEA	-1,976.00	17,017.00	-15,041.10	-0.10
20	LCCG_Health and Wellbeing with ALM	CCG_LCVS	0.00	3,000.00	-3,007.05	-7.05
		<b>Sub Total:</b>	<b>3,434.45</b>	<b>50,737.00</b>	<b>-46,049.08</b>	<b>8,122.37</b>
	<b>Balances Per Bank Statement to:31.03.2023</b>		<b>£ 53,963.04</b>	<b>89,434.50</b>	<b>-55,842.93</b>	<b>87,554.61</b>

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

Mr B. Gray

Signed:

27/01/2024

Date:

