

BEDFORDSHIRE REFUGEE AND ASYLUM SEEKER SUPPORT

England & Wales · Charity number 1096874

Details

Other names BRASS

Status Registered

Legal form Other

Registered 2003-04-07

Register [View on the Charity Commission register](#)

Contact

Address C/o 27b Tavistock Street
Bedford
MK40 2RB

Phone 01234211381

Email info@brass27b.org

Website www.brassbedford.org

Activities

Objects: FOR THE BENEFIT OF REFUGEES AND ASYLUM SEEKERS IN THE COUNTY OF BEDFORDSHIRE TO ASSIST IN THE RELIEF OF POVERTY, HARDSHIP AND DISTRESS.

Activities: We are a charity run by one paid co-ordinator and six and volunteers with an overall executive committee. We provide 2 drop in advice surgeries, an English Language Befriending project and an annual Summer outing, a women's social group and other social activitiesWe also provide regular website updates for our contacts and our service users.

Classification

- **How:** Provides Human Resources, Provides Buildings/facilities/open Space, Provides Services, Provides Advocacy/advice/information
- **What:** General Charitable Purposes, Education/training, The Advancement Of Health Or Saving Of Lives, Disability, The Prevention Or Relief Of Poverty, Accommodation/housing, Economic/community Development/employment
- **Who:** Children/young People, Elderly/old People, People With Disabilities, People Of A Particular Ethnic Or Racial Origin

Geography

- **Area of benefit:** BEDFORDSHIRE
- Bedford
- Central Bedfordshire

Finances

Period end	Income	Expenditure	Assets	Employees
2025-03-31	£196,497	£187,957	-	-
2024-03-31	£190,919	£175,573	-	-
2023-03-31	£142,258	£165,280	-	-
2022-03-31	£122,132	£170,703	-	-
2021-03-31	£161,072	£158,758	-	-

Trustees

Name	Role	Appointed
MORRIS JOHNS	Chair	2016-09-22
James Biggs		2015-10-22
Mahmoud El Sayed Ahmad		2025-10-09
Rev Sandra Howes		2023-09-21
Sanja Radic		2012-02-28
Silvia Borelli		2025-10-09
VICTORIA HILLIARD		2011-07-14
eric masih		2024-10-21

Accounts

Charity Registration Number: 1096874

BEDFORDSHIRE REFUGEE AND ASYLUM SEEKER SUPPORT (BRASS)

TRUSTEES REPORT AND ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2025

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FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2025**

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LEGAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION

CHARITY NAME: Bedfordshire Refugee and Asylum Seeker Support

OTHER NAME CHARITY IS KNOWN BY: BRASS

REGISTERED CHARITY NUMBER: 1096874

CHARITY'S PRINCIPAL ADDRESS:

27B Tavistock Street

Bedford

MK40 2RB

NAMES OF THE CHARITY TRUSTEES WHO MANAGE THE CHARITY

Victoria Hilliard

Cathy Moorhouse - Left 30th August 2024

Morris Johns - Chair since 3rd July 2020

Sanja Radic

James Biggs

Cass Howes

Jo Tester

Eric Masih

PROJECT CO-ORDINATOR

Brian Cunningham

BANKERS

RBS

Bedford Branch

15-19 Mill Street

Bedford

MK40 3EU

Main current account held since May 2021:

The Co-operative Bank

Delf House

Skelmersdale

WN8 6WT

REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2025

The Trustees of the charity present their report together with the financial statements for the year ended 31 March 2025, prepared in accordance with the Charities Act 2011 and the Accounting and Reporting by Charities Statement of Recommended Practice (SORP 2005).

From April 2024 to March 2025 finance meetings and Trustee meetings were held quarterly, attended by the Chair, Committee members and staff. BRASS employs a Project Co-ordinator to oversee day to day business and to provide specialist advice, a part-time Benefits and Integration Adviser, two Employment and Immigration Advisers, a Finance Manager, Finance Officer, Fundraiser and Admin Officer. Much of the charity's work is undertaken by a team of dedicated volunteers.

The National Lottery Community Fund is part funding costs of the following posts - the Project Co-ordinator, the Admin Officer, the Benefits Adviser and the Immigration Adviser

A further two year grant was awarded by Harpur Trust from October 2024 to support the costs of the part-time posts of the Finance Manager & Finance Officer, as well as the Integration Adviser salary costs.

East of England Local Government Association (EELGA) is funding the costs of the Employment Adviser posts.

We thank Wixamtree Trust for their continued ongoing support for funding. Also, we would like to thank The Steel Trust, Gale Family Charity Trust, 29th May 1961 charitable Trust and Margaret Brereton for providing unrestricted funding. We would like to thank all our funders for their ongoing support.

OBJECTIVES AND REVIEW OF ACTIVITIES

The charity is an established non-political, voluntary organisation working to empower, inform and support refugees and asylum seekers and their families, protect their rights and enable them to develop their independence and involvement in UK society. Specifically the charity was established for the benefit of refugees and asylum seekers in the County of Bedfordshire to assist in the relief of poverty, hardship or distress. Services are delivered from a local government owned property in Bedford town centre which is leased by BRASS.

BRASS continues to have strong working relationships with local organisations providing advice so that individuals can get support from the organisations best placed to offer it. Luton Law Centre and Luton law firms have qualified solicitors and case workers who take referrals from BRASS and provide telephone support to BRASS advisors. BRASS also works with the University of Bedfordshire Law Department to assist refugees with family reunification applications. BRASS works with the Citizens Advice Bureau to cross refer clients and makes referrals to the local MP who, in specific cases, helps with representations to the Home Office.

Referrals are received from Children's Services which is responsible for unaccompanied asylum seekers under the age of 18. The Community Voluntary Service (CVS) provides a regular supply of enthusiastic and committed volunteers and the Charity continues to receive invaluable support from the Bedford Borough Council.

BRASS works in partnership with both local and national charities. Advice and support are provided by the Refugee Council, which is the largest refugee agency in the UK, and Migrant Help. We are also a registered referrer for Bedford Food Bank. BRASS seeks to support the local voluntary sector and work towards financial self-sustainability.

BRASS is focused on working in partnership with other organisations to share knowledge and skills, prevent duplication, maximise effectiveness, cut costs and share facilities. On behalf of the Trustees of BRASS I can confirm that in carrying out our financial review we have considered and complied with our duty to have due regard to the Charity Commission's guidance on public benefit.

ACHIEVEMENTS AND PERFORMANCE

During the last financial year BRASS has supported 949 clients. We seek to support our client group's changing needs; the changes to the Benefits system and ever increasing complexity of immigration applications has increased demands for our services. Creating eVisa accounts was much more in demand this reporting year because the Home Office replaced Biometric Residence Permits (BRPs) with online immigration status records called eVisa. Most BRPs had an expiry date of 31 December 2024, and hence, there was a sudden demand to create eVisa accounts. We have had increasing numbers of clients with housing problems and needing help with the complexities of joining the social housing waiting lists.

We continue attending to our advice sessions three days a week, from 10am-2pm. We also offer appointments with our Immigration and Employment Advisers and with our Benefits Adviser. From April 2024 to March 2025 we were part of the Employment for Overseas Nationals (EON) project for the whole of Bedfordshire including in asylum hotels. The aim of the project was to promote effective integration by actions that support access to the labour market for overseas nationals in the East of England in order to deliver better employment outcomes. We worked with refugees and Ukrainians, and in addition we worked with asylum seekers before a decision was taken to assist them with the transition if they are granted asylum. Our target was to work with 100 clients but we exceeded that by registering 137 clients, with just over 50% being asylum seekers.

During the year we had 59 students attending classes with 13 volunteers providing English as a Second/Other Language lessons, amounting to a total of 399 lessons. In April we took over 50 people from the Sharnbrook Hotel to the Raptor Foundation and in August we had our annual seaside visit to Hunstanton. Refugee Week market stall was a success and the Football tournament at Russell Park was well attended and a great community event. We also had Christmas party for our clients and another at the Higgins Museum for the Sharnbrook residents.

Report of the Trustees cont'd....

FINANCIAL REVIEW

As in previous years, BRASS is very fortunate to have received funding from various different sources this year. During this year, we have received funding from:

The National Lottery Community Fund
Harpur Trust
Wixamtree Trust
Bedfordshire and Luton Community Foundation
The Garfield Weston Foundation
East of England Local Government Association (this is now called Local Government East)
Lottery Awards for All
29th May 1961 Charitable Trust
Bedfordshire Charitable Trust
Postcode Places Trust
The Hilden Charitable Fund
Gale Family Charity Trust

We thank all of our funders for their continued ongoing support this year.

Total Incoming Resources during the financial year were £196,497, almost 3% increase on the previous year. This has been used to provide funding to cover all our existing posts which are all filled and other direct costs and overheads. We are well on our way to completing funding for next year. We have a new fundraiser who started this year and have accessed 3 new funding sources and have other bids submitted awaiting results.

Costs increased this year by approximately 6% to £187,957 mainly due to an increase in staff pay and overheads.

FINANCIAL REVIEW RESERVES POLICY.

BRASS reserves as 31st March 2025, were £118,465. Of these funds £41,213 were restricted funds, the remaining £72,252 were unrestricted funds. The Trustee Board have established a policy whereby it aims to maintain sufficient unrestricted funds not invested in tangible fixed assets and not required to meet future budgeted expenditure, being the "free reserves", to be sufficient to support the future growth of the charity and provide sufficient reserves for dealing with possible contingencies such as short-term cessation of project activity or redundancy.

Approved by the Trustees and signed on their behalf by:



Morris Johns,
Chair

Date: 16.9.25

**INDEPENDENT EXAMINER'S REPORT TO THE TRUSTEES OF BEDFORDSHIRE REFUGEE AND
ASYLUM SEEKER SUPPORT**

I report on the financial statements of the charity for the year ended 31 March 2025 as set out on pages 7 to 12

This report is made solely to the charity's trustees, as a body, in accordance with section 145 of the Charities Act 2011 ('the 2011 Act'). My work has been undertaken so that I might state to the charity's trustees those matters I am required to state to them in this report and for no other purpose. To the fullest extent permitted by law, I do not accept or assume responsibility to anyone other than the charity and the charity's trustees as a body, for my work, for this report, or for the opinions I have formed.

Respective responsibilities of trustees and examiner

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

It is my responsibility to:

- * examine the financial statements under section 145 of the 2011 Act;
- * to follow the procedures laid down in the General Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the 2011 Act; and
- * 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 financial statements presented with those records. It also includes consideration of any unusual items or disclosures in the financial statements 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 financial statements present a 'true and fair view' and the report is limited to those matters set out in the statement below.

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 financial statements which accord with the accounting records and comply with the accounting 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 financial statements to be reached.



John Esam

Mayfield Lodge
1 Main Road,
Biddenham
MK40 4BB

Dated: 8th Sept 2025

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES AS AT 31ST MARCH 2025

Incoming Resources	Note	Unrestricted Funds	Restricted Funds	Total 2025	Total 2024
		£	£	£	£
Grants receivable	3	46,430	142,863	189,293	181,156
Donations and other fund-raising activities	3	3,326	2,000	5,326	6,088
Investment income		405	-	405	375
Other income		1,473	-	1,473	3,300
Total Incoming Resources		51,634	144,863	196,497	190,919
Resources Expended					
Costs of generating funds		11,550	-	11,550	9,300
Charitable activities		23,628	152,672	176,300	166,234
Governance costs		107	-	107	39
Total Resources Expended		35,285	152,672	187,957	175,573
Net Incoming/ (Outgoing) Resources		16,349	(7,809)	8,540	15,346
Funds brought forward		70,033	39,892	109,925	94,579
Transfers between funds		(9,130)	9,130	-	-
Funds carried forward		77,252	41,213	118,465	109,925

All of the charity's activities are derived from the continuing operations during the two periods above.

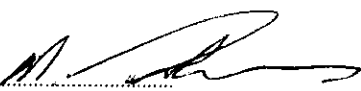
BALANCE SHEET AT 31ST MARCH 2025

	Note	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	Total 2025 £	Total 2024 £
Tangible assets	5	554	-	554	1,267
Current Assets					
Debtors and Prepayments	6	-	11,219	11,219	30,316
Cash and Bank in hand		76,698	32,814	109,512	85,916
Total Current Assets		76,698	44,033	120,731	116,232
Creditors Amounts falling due within one year	7	-	2,820	2,820	7,574
Net Current Assets		76,698	41,213	117,911	108,658
Net Assets		77,252	41,213	118,465	109,925
Funds of the Charity					
Restricted funds	10	-	41,213	41,213	39,732
Unrestricted & Restricted capital reserve		554	-	554	1,267
Designated funds		529	-	529	775
Total funds		77,252	41,213	118,465	109,925

Trustees' responsibilities

The trustees acknowledge their responsibility to comply with the requirements of the Charity Commission and confirm that the accounts have been prepared in accordance with Accounting and Reporting by Charities (SORP 2005) and Charities Act 2011.

Approved by the trustees and signed on their behalf by:

Name.....

Dated.....1.10.25

1. Accounting Policies

Statement of compliance

The financial statements have been prepared on the basis of historic cost and in accordance with the applicable United Kingdom Reporting Standards, the Charities Act 2011 and the Accounting and Reporting by Charities Statement of Recommended Practice (SORP 2005).

Basis of Preparation

As permitted by SORP 2005 the trustees have adapted the heading used to describe Incoming Resources and Resources Expended within the Statement of Financial Activities when presenting the results for the year.

INCOMING RESOURCES

Incoming resources are recognised when received or receivable by the charity. Income is derived from fund raising activities, donations. Grants are recognised on receipt or award unless, in the judgement of the trustees, conditions attached to the grant make it improbable that they will be received.

RESTRICTED FUNDS

Restricted funds are to be used for a specific purpose as laid down by the donor. Expenditure which meets these criteria is identified against the fund.

UNRESTRICTED FUNDS

Unrestricted funds are incoming resources received or receivable generated for charitable purposes and available for use at the discretion of the trustees in furtherance of the general objectives of the charity and have not been designated for other purposes.

Paid Employees

BRASS employs a Project Co-ordinator to oversee day to day business and to provide specialist advice, a part-time Benefits Adviser and Integration Officer, two Employment and Immigration Advisers, a Finance Manager, a Finance Officer, a Fundraiser and an Admin Officer. Much of the charity's work is carried out by a team of dedicated volunteers.

Trustee Expenses

There were no payments or reimbursements made to any trustees during the financial year.

Fixed Assets

Assets with a useful life of more than two years are capitalised at cost and depreciated over their useful life. Depreciation on computer equipment is charged at 33% on a straight line basis.

Fixed Assets funded by capital grants are capitalised and a restricted capital reserve created. The reserve is reduced by the depreciation charge.

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST MARCH 2025

2. Property & Operating Leases

i) Operating Lease Commitments - Nil.

(ii) The annual commitment for the land and buildings lease amounts to £10,686, (£9,688 in 2023/24), where the term remaining is between one and five years. There are no further lease commitments. Rent charges have increased for the current year.

3. Income from grants, donations and legacies	Unrestricted Funds	Restricted Funds	Total 2025	Total 2024
	£	£	£	£
Grants receivable	46,430	142,863	189,293	181,531
Donations and other fund raising activities	3,326	2,000	5,326	6,088
	49,756	144,863	194,619	187,619

4. Resources Expended

	Unrestricted Funds	Restricted Funds	Total 2025	Total 2024
	£	£	£	£
Staff payroll costs	3,253	135,843	139,096	115,174
Volunteer expenses & training	(115)	-	(115)	394
Staff travel & training	848	-	848	840
Social worker	-	-	-	2,549
Rent, rates & insurance (Note 2)	4,406	7,378	11,784	13,135
IT, telephone & internet	756	4,000	4,756	4,824
Utilities, cleaning & maintenance.	7,776	-	7,776	4,204
Stationery, printing & postage	599	825	1,424	1,943
Publications & subscriptions	595	-	595	309
Web & promotional costs	716	-	716	179
Client outings & welfare costs	622	3,466	4,088	2,587
Depreciation	554	160	714	1,335
Governance costs	107	-	107	572
Other expenses	15,168	1,000	16,168	17,235
Total	35,285	152,672	187,957	165,280

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST MARCH 2025

5. Fixed Assets	Computer Equipment
Cost	£
At 1 April 2024	16,532
Additions	-
At 31 March 2025	<u>16,532</u>
Depreciation	
At 1 April 2024	15,265
Charge for year	<u>713</u>
At 31 March 2025	<u>15,978</u>
Net Book Value	
At 31 March 2024	<u>1,267</u>
At 31 March 2025	<u>554</u>

6. Debtors and prepayments due within one year

	2025	2024
	£	£
Debtors	-	-
Prepayments and accrued income	<u>11,219</u>	<u>30,316</u>
	<u>11,219</u>	<u>30,316</u>

7. Creditors and accruals due within one year

	2025	2024
	£	£
Creditors	30	30
Deferred income	-	-
Accruals	<u>2,790</u>	<u>7,544</u>
	<u>2,820</u>	<u>7,574</u>

8. Staff Costs

	2025	2024
	£	£
Gross wages	128,450	121,366
Employers National Insurance costs	9,482	8,535
Employers National Insurance rebate	(5,000)	(5,000)
Pension costs	6,164	5,821
	<u>139,096</u>	<u>130,722</u>

During the year BRASS employed; one full-time employee and seven part-time employees.

No employee earned more than £60,000.

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST MARCH 2025

9. Restricted Income Funds as at March 31st 2025

Fund Name	Purpose and restriction
National Lottery Community Fund (i)	The money is part funding the salary costs of the Project Co-ordinator, the Admin Officer, the Benefits Adviser and the Immigration Adviser.
Lottery Awards for all (i) (a)	This fund is used to pay for beneficiary events and days out.
Harpur Trust (ii)	A two-year grant was awarded from October 2024 to support part of the salary costs of the part-time posts of the Finance Manager, Finance Assistant and the Integration Adviser.
East of England Local Government Association (iii)	These restricted funds are funding the Employment Support work.
Bedfordshire & Luton Community Fund	This money has funded part of the rent overheads cost.

10.Movement of Major Funds

Fund Name	Balance at 1st April 2024 £	Incoming resources £	Outgoing resources £	Transfers £	Balance at 31st March 2025 £
Other	70,033	51,634	(35,285)	(9,130)	77,252
Unrestricted Funds	70,033	51,634	(35,285)	(9,130)	77,252
Bedfordshire and Luton Community Trust	2,378	5,000	(7,378)		-
East of England Local Government Association	29,585	42,238	(38,286)	-	33,537
Big Lottery (i)	-	65,625	(71,206)	5,581	-
Lottery Awards for All (i) (a)	6,420	-	(3,466)	-	2,954
Harpur Trust (ii)	(2,103)	30,000	(30,176)	2,279	-
Panacea Trust	(1,270)	-	-	1,270	-
Small restricted grants	4,722	2,000	(2,000)	-	4,722
	39,732	144,863	(152,512)	9,130	41,213
Restricted capital reserve	160	-	(160)	-	-
Restricted Funds	39,892	144,863	(152,672)	9,130	41,213
	109,925	196,497	(187,957)	-	118,465

Accounts



25th Anniversary

Annual Report

2024

(April 2023 – March 2024)

'A world where refugees and asylum seekers
are included, accepted and supported by
society'

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Reference and Administrative Details

Charity name	Bedfordshire Refugee and Asylum Seeker Support (BRASS)
Registered Charity Number	1096874
OISC Number	N200100432
Office address	27b Tavistock Street Bedford, MK40 2RB

Staff

Brian Cunningham - Coordinator
Andrea Tulloch - Benefits Adviser, Integration Officer
Helena Maddock - Immigration & Employment Adviser
Jon Howton - Finance Officer
Pat Porter – Office Manager
Rani Sheemar - Finance Manager
Sharifullah Dorani - Immigration & Employment Adviser

Volunteers

Andrea Jones	John Watkins
Anne Shortley	Kathy Mortimer
Brenda Betts	Lindsey Coldwell
Cathy Wood	Liz Turner
Christine Tait	Mahmoud El Sayed
Clare Ball	Michael Barber
Clive Till	Nicola Lindsay
David Thomas	Sabina Billing
Gordon James	Sally Hilliard
Jane Marriott	Sidney Miller
John Esam	Sue Horn
Joanna Clark	

Trustees

Morris Johns (Chair)	Cathy Moorhouse
Victoria Hilliard (Vice Chair)	James Biggs
Sanja Radic (Secretary)	Jo Tester
Cassandra Howes	

Structure, Governance and Management

Governing Document

BRASS is a registered charity governed by a constitution that was adopted on 1st October 1999 and then revised on 18th September 2002 and 5th March 2003. BRASS is a non-political, voluntary organisation, established for the benefit of refugees and asylum seekers in the County of Bedfordshire to assist in the relief of poverty, hardship or distress.

Organisational Structure

BRASS employs 1 full-time member of staff; a Project Co-ordinator overseeing day to day business. We also employ a number of part time staff; a Benefits Adviser, 2 Immigration Advisers, 2 Employment Advisers, an Integration Officer, a Finance Manager, a Finance Officer and an Office Manager. Staff are supported by a team of dedicated volunteers, making our services excellent value for money. Services are delivered from a town centre, local government owned property leased by BRASS. A board of skilled and experienced trustees drawn from the local community oversee and govern services.

Recruitment and Appointment of Trustees

BRASS recognises that the recruitment and selection of new trustees can strongly influence our future effectiveness. The organisation aims to follow good practice in this field as well as the provisions of our constitution. All BRASS trustees are elected at the Annual General Meeting or are co-opted. When looking to recruit new trustees, the committee will attempt to fill any gaps in skills, knowledge and experience of our current trustees and reflect the diversity of the communities in which we operate. We will use the most appropriate ways of recruiting new trustees, including local networks and advertising. We will prepare role descriptions for trustees, ensure that all potential trustees meet all eligibility criteria and ask all potential trustees about any possible conflicts of interest.

All trustee nominations are presented at the Annual General Meeting or the next Executive Committee. They will then be invited to meet with the chairperson to discuss their nomination and this discussion will be recorded on their nomination paper and then, once accepted, their name and details will be given to the Charity Commission.

Relationships with Other Organisations

BRASS believes that by building capacity through partnership working we can facilitate sustainability of service provision. The work of BRASS complements other services through the co-ordinator's involvement with The New Migration Partnership and the Bedfordshire Advice Forum – local multi-agency forums where issues are raised, information exchanged and partnership solutions explored. BRASS is a key participant in the organisation of the annual Bedford

Refugee Week which holds events to raise awareness of the issues facing refugees and asylum seekers.

BRASS has strong working relationships with local organisations so that individuals can get support from the organisation best placed to provide it. Luton Law Centre has qualified solicitors and case workers who take referrals from BRASS and provide telephone support to BRASS advisers. There is cross referral of clients between BRASS and the Citizens Advice Bureau and the PBIC. BRASS makes referrals to the local MP Mohammad Yasin who helps with representations to the Home Office for specific cases. Referrals are received from the Social Care Team, which is responsible for unaccompanied under-18 asylum seekers, for both advice at the drop-in and English tuition. Community Voluntary Service (CVS) provides a regular supply of enthusiastic and committed volunteers and Bedford Borough Council supports BRASS and contributes to Refugee Week.

BRASS works in partnership with both local and national charities. Advice and support are provided by the Refugee Council, which is the largest refugee agency in the UK. BRASS is a referral organisation for clients requiring provisions via the Bedford Foodbank.

Supporting the local voluntary sector and working towards some financial self-sustainability has become an important part of the organisational ethic.

Risk Management

The main risk again this year has been Covid at the earlier part of the year. We were fully functioning again for most of the year and continue with safety measures such as good air circulation in place.

We ensure that our health and safety policy, safeguarding policy, fire risk assessment and fire safety management plan are regularly reviewed and updated. The building and our services are appropriately insured to safeguard the organisation and volunteers with the tutoring project are subject to DBS checks in order to protect our clients. Our drop-in advice service is regulated by the Office of the Immigration Services Commissioner (OISC) and we are regularly audited.

As with other small charities, BRASS is affected by external factors, particularly in terms of the economy and legal changes affecting asylum seekers and refugees. The economic situation nationally continues to affect fundraising and BRASS has done well to secure a 5 year lottery grant. BRASS continues to seek and secure other grants which allow us to maintain and expand our services. BRASS has had members of staff successfully qualify for OISC level 1. They are supervised by a member of staff qualified to level 2. In addition, it is important for BRASS that we are able to provide volunteers with training and progression in return for their commitment. BRASS is also affected by media coverage of refugees and asylum seekers. This can result in increased interest in helping our clients, but it can also have a negative impact when prejudice against refugees and asylum seekers increases.

Internally, BRASS has a group of committed trustees with skills and experience that can help with the development of the organisation. The National Lottery Community Fund and the Harpur Trust grants provide longer term stability for our staff and the ability to expand the number of staff we employ and therefore the capacity to expand our services. Our success in fundraising also presents some challenges as many trusts will only fund an organisation for a limited time, which means we have to be increasingly proactive in seeking funders. We are fortunate to have a good number of committed volunteers, enabling us to provide reliable and high-quality services beyond our drop-in advice service.

The organisation has a policy to hold financial reserves of six months, a level which we have now achieved and exceeded.



Message from the Chair of Trustees

Dear Friends,

It is with immense pride and gratitude that I present this year's Chairman of the Trustees Report. This past year has been both challenging and inspiring, with continued global upheaval driving more people to seek refuge, safety, and dignity. Thanks to your unwavering support, we have been able to extend a hand of compassion to refugees facing unimaginable hardships.

Achievements and Impact

Our mission remains steadfast: to provide essential services and support for refugees and asylum seekers through their transition into our community. Over the past year, we have witnessed the impact of our collective efforts in several key areas:



1. Emergency Assistance and Relief

The ongoing global conflicts, especially in regions such as the Middle East, Africa, and Eastern Europe, have led to a significant increase in the number of displaced individuals. As many refugees needing immediate relief are familiar with BRASS, they approached us in the first place, we then directed them to appropriate organisations, offering essentials such as food, clothing, and temporary shelter.

2. Integration and Education Programmes

One of the cornerstones of our work has been helping refugees integrate into the local community. Our English language and skills training programmes have been pivotal in this regard. We are proud to report that 64 clients attended English and life skill courses enabling them to find employment or continue their education. This year, we helped 254 individuals, eager to contribute to the country that welcomed them, with employment matters.

BRASS continued to help the refugees settle in Bedford, partly by introducing them to other parts of their newly adopted country, like a trip to the seaside in Hunstanton. It never ceases to amaze me to watch their reaction to encountering the sea, sometimes for the first time ever in their lives; with what wonder and awe they behold the mighty expanse of wild waves. As part of the familiarisation effort, BRASS organised three coach trips, one boat trip and of course a Christmas Party.

3. Advocacy and Community Awareness

Beyond direct support, we have also played a crucial role in advocating for refugees' rights and raising awareness about their struggles, including

many events like a football tournament during Refugee Week. These initiatives have fostered greater understanding and solidarity within our wider community, as well as influencing local policies to be more inclusive and supportive of refugee populations.

Financial Overview

I am pleased to report that despite economic pressures, our financial position remains strong. This year, we raised £190,919 through a combination of public donations, government grants, and partnerships with local businesses and foundations. We have continued to steward these funds responsibly, ensuring that over 87% of our income directly supports our core programmes and services. I would like to extend a heartfelt thank you to all donors and funders whose generosity makes our work possible.

Looking Ahead

The needs of refugees are growing, and as an organisation, we must continue to adapt and expand our services. Our strategic priorities for the coming year include:

- **Strengthening Volunteer Engagement:** Volunteers remain the lifeblood of our organisation. Next year, we will aim to provide training programmes whenever practical to empower our volunteers with the tools and knowledge needed to serve refugees even more effectively.
- **Ensure the effective and transparent use of resources.** We realise that times are hard, and donations are limited, so we pledge to ensure the maximum use of resources.

Conclusion

None of the achievements outlined above would have been possible without the tireless efforts of our dedicated staff, volunteers, and trustees. I would like to personally thank each and every one of you for your commitment to this cause. Your compassion, generosity, and hard work have changed lives and offered hope to those in desperate circumstances.

Our work, however, is far from over. As we look toward the future, we remain committed to building a welcoming, inclusive community where refugees can thrive, contribute, and find peace.

Thank you for standing with us in solidarity and for your continued support.

Sincerely,

Morris Johns, Chair of Trustees

Co-ordinator's Report

The biggest event and news this year is our 25th Anniversary party in Russell Park.

BRASS started in St Luke's church which was on nearby St Peters Street. The reason it started there was because the church itself was started by refugees itself many centuries ago. They were fleeing religious persecution in Moravia in Eastern Europe.



Many refugees were coming to Bedford in 1998 from Afghanistan, and refugees also came following the breakup of Yugoslavia. The Vicar of the church thought we should do something so they had a summer barbecue in the church grounds and invited all who were interested. BRASS grew from that day. It was a few years before we became a registered charity. The church has since closed (it is now the Quarry Theatre) and we moved to our current location at 27b Tavistock Street though the theatre still displays details of the history of the building. Indeed I remember our 20th Anniversary party there. I hope many of you made it. There were well over 100 of us in attendance.

Another big happening near Bedford was the opening of the Asylum Hotel in Sharnbrook. There were a few "antis" at first but myself and others went and gave talks to people in the village, a few of our volunteers live there. We are particularly grateful for Paolo at St Peters church who gathered a large group of around 40 locals who I and other charities spoke to and gave out a lot of our myth busting leaflets.

When it was realised it would be for families a lot of people rallied around and have now formed the very active Sharnbrook Support Group. They need to come under the umbrella of a registered charity to be able to visit the residents on site, which BRASS was very pleased to provide and we do all their safeguarding checks, over 50 now I think and they are happily helping the residents with visits, clothes and toys. We have also done 3 of our coach trips for the residents.

We have also done coach trips for our other clients, Hunstanton beach popular as ever, will let Andrea tell you more about our social activities and had a very busy Refugee Week this year with our usual market stall and myth busting leaflets and our football tournament was the busiest ever with 11 teams including 4 refugee teams! We are also talking to Sports England about more regular football coaching in the future.

So we march into the future with our expanded drop in advice, English tutoring and social activities. Can't believe I have been here 15 years. Hope one day there will be a 50th Anniversary!

Brian Cunningham, BRASS Co-ordinator

Service Updates

Drop-in Report

For all of this reporting year, our drop-ins were open on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays. Like the previous years, we continued to solve clients' matters through telephone appointments if they could not attend. We supported our clients with various matters, including immigration, benefits, employment, (social) housing, utility bills, debts, professional driving theory licence, taxi/private hire driver applications, Uber Eats/Just Eat driver applications, and school/nursery. Because of the demand, we will continue to open three days a week.

As my colleague, Helena Maddock, elaborates, our Employment Project has made significant strides this year. We successfully registered over 70 new clients and facilitated their participation in a variety of courses. We also created or improved CVs for most of them, enhancing their employability.

We have two immigration Advisors, Helena Maddock and Sharifullah Dorani. They continued to assist hundreds of clients with their immigration matters, including helping clients create a UKVI (Home Office) account to access their eVisa; eVisas were much more in demand this reporting year because the Home Office is developing a digital immigration system. This means that the Home Office will replace physical documents, mainly Biometric Resident Permits/Cards (all of which will expire on 31 December 2024), with an online record of immigration status. We also have Andrea Tulloch who, as well as being our Integration Officer, gives benefit advice.

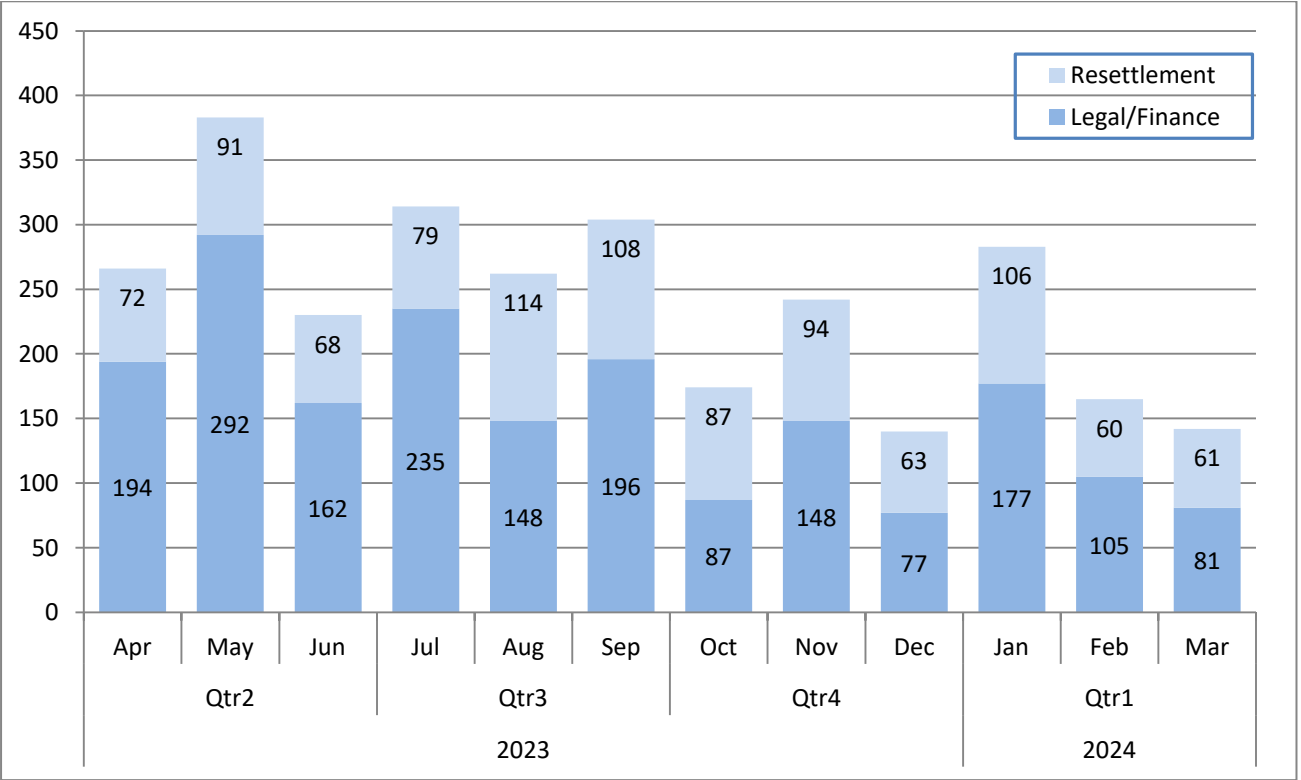
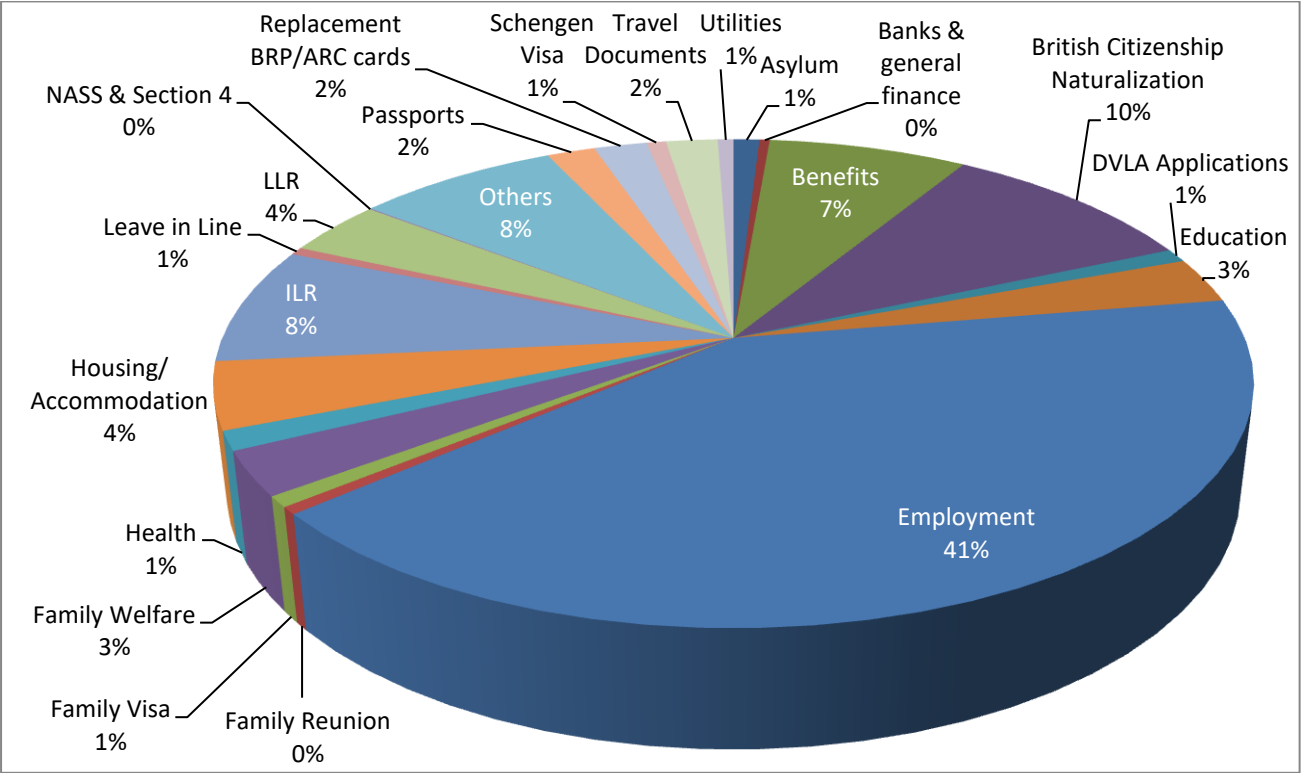
Our advisors continued to offer a comprehensive approach when it comes to immigration matters: they help our clients fill in the application form, book a UKVCAS appointment, and sort out their supporting documents.

Once again, we were able to support hundreds of clients this reporting year. This would not have been possible without the invaluable support of our volunteers and Social Work placement students. Their dedication and hard work played a crucial role, and BRASS is deeply appreciative of their contribution.

Sharifullah Dorani, Immigration and Employment Adviser



Drop-in Enquiries 2023-2024



Employment Project

We continued to support our many employment clients for the duration of the project which ended in October 2023. We greatly exceeded our targets again. We then started a new contract to provide employment support until the end of March 2024.

The new project was called Employability for Overseas Nationals (EON) and in five months we registered nearly 40 clients on this project. We had a particular emphasis on helping people into Adult Social Care but also continued to help with IELTS courses, getting qualifications recognised by ENIC, providing business advice through MENTA and providing general employment help and advice.

Our clients have been very grateful for our support, in the words of one client: "I wanted to take a moment to express my deepest gratitude for your unwavering support and invaluable assistance. Your guidance has made a significant difference in my journey, and I am truly grateful for your kindness".

Helena Maddock, Immigration and Employment Adviser

Integration

In April a group of clients went to Stanwick Lakes and enjoyed walking, the wild life and the scenery followed by a picnic. June was a busy month as we arranged for the Sharnbrook Hotel residents to go to Wicksteed Park, then the Rotary Club paid for our clients to cruise the River Ouse and have lunch on board the John Bunyan Boat.

During Refugee Week we held our annual 5 a side football tournament in Russell Park there were 11 teams which is the largest number of teams we have had so far. The teams were organised by Lindsey Cauldwell who did a fantastic job, she was helped by Mohamed an asylum seeker who was sponsored by Bedfordshire FA to complete his Referee Training Course.

In July we celebrated 25 years of BRASS in conjunction with Athena Housing (who look after young unaccompanied asylum seekers and often refer them to us for English tuition and social events) by having a picnic in the park and we were joined by some of the residents from the Sharnbrook Hotel which was a fun packed day for everyone. The year was rounded off with our annual trip to Hunstanton and ended with our Christmas Party which was held at St Peters De Merton.

Andrea Tullock, Integration Officer

Objectives and Activities

Vision

A world where refugees and asylum seekers are included, accepted and supported by society.

Mission Statement

BRASS is an established charity working to empower, inform and support refugees and asylum seekers and to protect rights with an aim to develop independence and involvement in UK society.

Strategic Objectives 2020-2024

The trustees have reviewed BRASS' strategic objectives and made some changes. These objectives form the basis for planning our activities over four years. We plan to use these to inform annual targets to ensure we remain focussed on our strategic objectives.

- 1) Sustainable development of BRASS as an organisation to serve the interests and needs of refugees and asylum seekers and their families.
- 2) To enhance the ability of refugees and asylum seekers to understand and navigate UK procedures, processes and systems and promoting change to create a fairer system.
- 3) Provide opportunities for refugees and asylum seekers to increase independence, integration and confidence through learning and social activities.
- 4) Encourage participation of refugees and asylum seekers in the development and management of BRASS.
- 5) To build partnerships with other agencies, to cross refer clients, share information and campaign for the welfare of refugees and asylum seekers locally and nationally.
- 6) To inform and educate the community of Bedford and foster relationships between refugees and asylum seekers and the wider community.

Services

BRASS currently offers three drop-in advice sessions staffed by volunteers and BRASS staff - on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays, 10am-2pm, with fewer sessions conducted via telephone than in the earlier months of the year. These are accredited by the Office of the Immigration Services Commissioner (OISC) to give immigration advice. Through funding by the National Lottery Community Fund and the East of England LGA, BRASS employs a specialist benefits adviser, 2 employment advisers and 2 immigration advisers. We also support the

Refugee Legal Assistance project run by the University of Bedfordshire on its Luton Campus on Tuesday evenings during term time, which specialises in refugee family reunions. The project has, over recent years, supported over 55 families.

This year we had an asylum hotel open in Sharnbrook near Bedford.

We helped start a Sharnbrook Support Group which now has around 45 local members who help the residents in many ways. We continue to assist the group by allowing them access to the hotel under the BRASS umbrella and we oversee DBS checks and safeguarding, as we do for all our tutors.

Our tutoring programme matches volunteer tutors with refugees and asylum seekers who want to learn or improve their English language skills. This service is offered in the community, at the BRASS offices and online. BRASS provides small group tuition in numeracy and preparing for the Life in the UK test

Our allotment plot continues to be worked by client volunteers. Our popular annual summer trip to the seaside (Hunstanton) and our coach trip to Wicksteed Park for clients were oversubscribed.

BRASS plays a leading role in Refugee Week each year, organising a variety of events to promote refugee issues. This year's events revolved around raising awareness via our market stall with The Higgins, myth-busting leaflets, suggested reading lists and art installations at St Paul's Church.

Public Benefit

BRASS provides a range of services to support refugees and asylum seekers in the Bedford community and further afield. Free immigration advice is in short supply in this area and without the service provided by BRASS through phone and appointment advice sessions, many refugees and asylum seekers would be left to tackle the often complex immigration system alone. Advice is also provided on a range of resettlement issues including employment, housing, education and benefits. This advice enables our clients to better integrate into society and to learn to manage their own affairs independently.

For those who want to improve their English, BRASS' tutoring project matches volunteer tutors with clients. This relationship can often provide improved self-confidence and support with other aspects of integration. We also run classes for those wishing to improve their numeracy and those preparing for the Life in the UK test. The BRASS allotment provides a sense of community to clients, as well as offering asylum seekers (who are not allowed to work) activities to fill their time as well as fresh produce to take home.

BRASS is working to inform and educate the public on issues around immigration and asylum. Asylum seekers are a stigmatised group and through our work with Refugee Week and our coordinator giving talks to groups in the Bedford area, we are encouraging the public to look differently at refugees and asylum seekers and to see the positive contribution they make to our society.

Achievements and Performance

Progress towards Strategic Objectives 2020-2024

We have measured our progress on our previous strategic objectives as the review took place at the end of the reporting year.

Sustainable development of BRASS as an organisation to serve the interests and needs of refugees and asylum seekers.

BRASS' advice sessions, our core service, is provided mainly in person with face to face meetings with clients with appropriate Covid measures in place. We also continue to provide specialist benefits advice. Our English Language project has been boosted by the appointment of an Integration Officer to run the tuition service.

The BRASS allotment continues to offer benefit to clients.

To enhance the ability of refugees and asylum seekers to understand UK procedures, processes and systems.

The UK immigration system can be confusing even for those of us who deal with it on a regular basis, so navigating it can be near impossible for those who are new to the country and may have limited English. Through our OISC registered drop-in immigration advice sessions, BRASS helps refugees and asylum seekers to deal with these complex systems. Advice is also provided around other non-immigration issues such as housing, employment and finance to aid integration. We are able to provide specialist advice through our immigration advisers, employment advisers and benefits adviser. Our popular English language tuition also gives refugees and asylum seekers the skills to better navigate British systems and our classes in numeracy and preparing for the Life in the UK test also aid integration.

Increasing independence and confidence through learning and social activities.

Our tuition project provides one-to-one/group tuition to those who wish to improve their English, numeracy and preparing for the Life in the UK test. It is hoped that this will enable them to become more independent and better able to integrate into society. Our allotment provides a place for our clients to relax, meet new people and grow their own food.

To raise awareness in wider society of issues faced by refugees and asylum seekers.

BRASS is always heavily involved with activities in Bedford celebrating Refugee Week. Myth busting leaflets are given out to members of the public and events are held at various venues around the town including a very popular football tournament and fun day in one of Bedford's public parks. We also had a publicity raising market stall where we distributed myth busting leaflets. BRASS' coordinator gives talks to local groups and the feedback forms completed at the end of these talks indicate that perceptions of refugees and asylum seekers have been changed by what they have heard. We regularly publish positive stories about our clients and information about refugees and the asylum system on our website and Facebook page.

Encourage participation of refugees and asylum seekers in the development and management of BRASS.

BRASS continually encourages clients and former clients to become involved in BRASS, whether through attending groups and activities, becoming a volunteer or joining the committee. A former client is now on our committee and some of our volunteers have previously used our services. We have also provided social work placements to a number of students, some of whom are from a refugee background.

To build partnerships with other agencies, to cross refer clients, share information and campaign on behalf of the wellbeing of refugees and asylum seekers locally and nationally.

BRASS works with other agencies in a variety of ways. BRASS works with many local charities and networks. Our coordinator is the Chair of The New Migration Partnership and is on the steering group of the Bedford Advice Forum – local multi-agency forums where issues are raised, information exchanged and partnership solutions explored. BRASS is a key participant in the organisation of the annual Bedford Refugee Week which holds events to raise awareness of the issues facing refugees and asylum seekers.

Referrals are received from Children's Services which is responsible for unaccompanied asylum seekers under the age of 18. The Community Voluntary Service (CVS) provides a regular supply of enthusiastic and committed volunteers and the Charity continues to receive invaluable support from the Bedford Borough.

BRASS has been very involved with Refugee Week in Bedford for many years. The aim of Refugee Week is to raise awareness of the issues faced by refugees and asylum seekers and the positive contributions they make to British society. Covid has had a serious effect upon the level of engagement in the past but we are back working with the local community in terms of giving talks to various groups in the Bedford area to change perceptions of these issues and gathering feedback from those who attend to assess changing attitudes.

Fundraising activities

We would like to thank the following organisations from whom we have received grants over the past years

The National Lottery Community Fund
Harpur Trust
Wixamtree Trust
The Beds and Luton Community Foundation
The Garfield Weston Foundation
Bedfordshire Charitable Trust

Panacea Charitable Trust
Beatrice Laing Trust
East of England LGA
WW4R1
Lottery Awards for All

We would also like to thank all of the individual donors who support BRASS through one off and regular donations.

BRASS would like to thank Karen Mayoh for her wonderful work fundraising for over 15 years and we welcome Rosia Curtis our new fundraiser.

Future Plans and the challenges ahead

Our services have been steadily resuming this year as we came out of Covid. We are now helping clients in numbers higher than pre Covid.

We have obtained a new five year grant with the National Lottery to help with our long term stability and continue to work other local funders.

BRASS will continue to prioritise the needs of our clients by providing good quality, reliable services. In order to safeguard BRASS and ensure that our vital services continue to be available, we will work to ensure good governance to maintain stability. BRASS is fortunate to be in a secure financial position, with more than 6 months of reserves. There are bound to be other challenges ahead, but we are confident that BRASS is well placed to face them.





Getting Involved with BRASS

Volunteers are often needed for our drop-in, English tutoring and social events.

If you are interested in becoming involved with BRASS as a volunteer, please contact Co-ordinator Brian Cunningham on 01234 211381 (mobile 07541 644989) or brian@brass27b.org. For further information on any of our work, please check our website www.brassbedford.org.uk and Facebook page www.facebook.com/brassbedford.

Charity Registration Number: 1096874

**BEDFORDSHIRE REFUGEE AND ASYLUM SEEKER SUPPORT
(BRASS)**

TRUSTEES REPORT AND ACCOUNTS
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2024

CONTENTS OF THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2024

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LEGAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION

CHARITY NAME: Bedfordshire Refugee and Asylum Seeker Support

OTHER NAME CHARITY IS KNOWN BY: BRASS

REGISTERED CHARITY NUMBER: 1096874

CHARITY'S PRINCIPAL ADDRESS:

27B Tavistock Street
Bedford
MK40 2RB

NAMES OF THE CHARITY TRUSTEES WHO MANAGE THE CHARITY

Victoria Hilliard – Vice Chair
Cathy Moorhouse - Left 31st March 2024
Morris Johns – Chair
Sanja Radic – Secretary
James Biggs
Cass Howes
Jo Tester

PROJECT CO-ORDINATOR

Brian Cunningham

BANKERS

RBS
Bedford Branch
15-19 Mill Street
Bedford
MK40 3EU

Main current account held since May 2021 :-

The Co-operative Bank
Delf House
Skelmersdale
WN8 6WT

REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES

REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2024

The Trustees of the charity present their report together with the financial statements for the year ended 31 March 2024, prepared in accordance with the Charities Act 2011 and the Accounting and Reporting by Charities Statement of Recommended Practice (SORP 2005).

From April 2023 to March 2024 finance meetings and Trustee meetings were held quarterly, attended by the Chair, Committee members and staff.

BRASS employs a Project Co-ordinator to oversee day to day business and to provide specialist advice, and a part-time Benefits Adviser, Employment Adviser, Integration Officer, Immigration Adviser, Finance Manager, Finance Officer and Office Manager. Much of the charity's work is undertaken by a team of dedicated volunteers.

OBJECTIVES AND REVIEW OF ACTIVITIES

The charity is an established non-political, voluntary organisation working to empower, inform and support refugees and asylum seekers and their families, protect their rights and enable them to develop their independence and involvement in UK society. Specifically the charity was established for the benefit of refugees and asylum seekers in the County of Bedfordshire to assist in the relief of poverty, hardship or distress. Services are delivered from a local government owned property in Bedford town centre which is leased by BRASS.

BRASS continues to have strong working relationships with local organisations providing advice so that individuals can get support from the organisations best placed to offer it. Luton Law Centre and Luton law firms have qualified solicitors and case workers who take referrals from BRASS and provide telephone support to BRASS advisors. BRASS also works with the University of Bedfordshire Law Department to assist refugees with family reunification applications. BRASS works with the Citizens Advice Bureau to cross refer clients and makes referrals to the local MP who, in specific cases, helps with representations to the Home Office.

Referrals are received from Children's Services which is responsible for unaccompanied asylum seekers under the age of 18. The Community Voluntary Service (CVS) provides a regular supply of enthusiastic and committed volunteers and the Charity continues to receive invaluable support from the Bedford Borough Council.

BRASS works in partnership with both local and national charities. Advice and support are provided by the Refugee Council, which is the largest refugee agency in the UK, and Migrant Help. We are also a registered referrer for Bedford Food Bank.

BRASS seeks to support the local voluntary sector and work towards financial self-sustainability. It leases its offices in Bedford town centre.

BRASS is focused on working in partnership with other organisations to share knowledge and skills, prevent duplication, maximise effectiveness, cut costs and share facilities. On behalf of the Trustees of BRASS I can confirm that in carrying out our financial review we have considered and complied with our duty to have due regard to the Charity Commission's guidance on public benefit.

REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES (CONT'D...)

ACHIEVEMENTS AND PERFORMANCE

During the last financial year BRASS has supported over 600 clients. We seek to support our client group's changing needs; the changes to the Benefits system and ever increasing complexity of immigration applications has increased demands for our services. BRASS now receives funding from the National Lottery Community Fund and will provide specialist advice through a Complex Caseworker for immigration matters and a Benefits Advisor. We also receive funding from East of England Local Government Association for employment advice. We are able to provide additional social activities through our Integration Officer whose costs are also funded by the Harpur Trust.

We continue attending to our advice sessions three times a week. We also offer appointments with our Benefits Adviser worker and our Immigration Adviser where we feel the need is urgent or needs to be addressed in person.

Our social activities this year have greatly increased and there were three additional coach trips for the residents of the Sharnbrook asylum hotel. We have supported the setting up the Sharnbrook Support Group. Members of the group are able to visit the residents under the BRASS umbrella and we carry out their DBS and references checks in accordance to our safeguarding Policy.

FINANCIAL REVIEW

As in previous years, BRASS is very fortunate to have received funding from various different sources this year.

The National Lottery Community Fund continues to fund our Co-ordinator, along with other posts and other running costs for five years.

The Harpur Trust continues its support by helping to fund our Finance Manager, Finance Officer and Integration Officer salary costs. BRASS has been able to utilise funding from the East of England Local Government Association to support employment advice. Money has been used to fund a part-time Benefits Adviser.

We thank Wixamtree Trust for its continued ongoing support for funding. Also we would like to thank Gale Trust, 29th May 1961 Charitable Trust and the Panacea Charitable Trust.

Total Incoming Resources during the financial year were £190,919. This has been used to provide funding to cover all our existing posts which are all filled and other direct costs and overheads. We are delighted to say that the Lottery continues to fund us and that this funding is for five years. Now that we have successfully secured this funding we now have more time to concentrate on putting in other bids. We are asking for funding over more than one year as we have done in the past. We are awaiting outcome of some of these new bids and are planning others early in the new financial year.

Costs increased this year by 10.39% to £175,573 mainly due to an increase in weekly hours for some staff. The increase in staff hours was mainly to support the growing needs of the increasing number of refugees coming into the country.

REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES (CONT'D...)

FINANCIAL REVIEW RESERVES POLICY

BRASS reserves as 31st March 2024 were £109,925. Of these funds £39,892 were restricted funds, the remaining £70,033 were unrestricted funds. The Trustee Board has established a policy whereby it aims to maintain sufficient unrestricted funds not invested in tangible fixed assets and not required to meet future budgeted expenditure, being the "free reserves", to support the future growth of the charity and provide reserves for dealing with possible contingencies such as short-term cessation of project activity or redundancy.

Approved by the Trustees and signed on their behalf by:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M. Johns'.

Morris Johns, Chair

Date: 17th October 2024

INDEPENDENT EXAMINER'S REPORT TO THE TRUSTEES OF BEDFORDSHIRE REFUGEE AND ASYLUM SEEKER SUPPORT

I report on the financial statements of the charity for the year ended 31 March 2024 as set out on pages 7 to 12

This report is made solely to the charity's trustees, as a body, in accordance with section 145 of the Charities Act 2011 ('the 2011 Act'). My work has been undertaken so that I might state to the charity's trustees those matters I am required to state to them in this report and for no other purpose. To the fullest extent permitted by law, I do not accept or assume responsibility to anyone other than the charity and the charity's trustees as a body, for my work, for this report, or for the opinions I have formed.

Respective responsibilities of trustees and examiner

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

It is my responsibility to:

- * examine the financial statements under section 145 of the 2011 Act;
- * to follow the procedures laid down in the General Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the 2011 Act; and
- * 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 financial statements presented with those records. It also includes consideration of any unusual items or disclosures in the financial statements 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 financial statements present a 'true and fair view' and the report is limited to those matters set out in the statement below.

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 financial statements which accord with the accounting records and comply with the accounting 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 financial statements to be reached.



John Esam
Mayfield Lodge
1 Main Road,
Biddenham
MK40 4BB

Dated: 17th October 2024

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES AS OF 31ST MARCH 2024

Incoming Resources	Note	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	Total 2024 £	Total 2023 £
Grants receivable	3	35,000	146,156	181,156	98,182
Donations and other fund raising activities	3	3,117	2,971	6,088	40,644
Investment income		375	0	375	114
Other income		3,300	0	3,300	3,318
Total Incoming Resources		41,792	149,127	190,919	142,258
Resources Expended					
Costs of generating funds		7,300	2,000	9,300	9,450
Charitable activities		16,424	149,810	166,234	155,258
Governance costs		39	0	39	572
Total Resources Expended	4	23,763	151,810	175,573	165,280
Net Incoming/ (Outgoing) Resources		18,029	(2,683)	15,346	(23,022)
Funds brought forward		47,004	47,575	94,579	117,601
Transfers between funds		5,000	(5,000)	0	0
Funds carried forward		70,033	39,892	109,925	94,579

All of the charity's activities derive from continuing operations during the above two periods.

BALANCE SHEET AT 31 MARCH 2024

	Note	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	Total 2024 £	Total 2023 £
Fixed Assets					
Tangible assets	5	1,107	160	1,267	930
Current Assets					
Debtors and Prepayments	6	10,000	20,316	30,316	21,910
Cash and Bank in hand		58,926	26,990	85,916	82,667
Total Current Assets		68,926	47,306	116,232	104,577
Creditors Amounts falling due within one year	7	0	7,574	7,574	10,928
Net Current Assets		68,926	39,732	108,658	93,649
Net Assets		70,033	39,892	109,925	94,579
Funds of the Charity					
Unrestricted funds	10	68,151	0	68,151	46,091
Restricted funds	10	0	39,732	39,732	46,721
Unrestricted & Restricted capital reserve		1,107	160	1,267	930
Designated funds		775	0	775	837
Total funds		70,033	39,892	109,925	94,579

Trustees' responsibilities

The trustees acknowledge their responsibility in complying with the requirements of the Charity Commission and confirm that the accounts have been prepared in accordance with Accounting and Reporting by Charities (SORP 2005) and Charities Act 2011.

Approved by the trustees and signed on their behalf by:


.....

Name: Morris Johns Dated: 17th October 2024

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2024

1. Accounting Policies

Statement of compliance

The financial statements have been prepared on the basis of historic cost and in accordance with the applicable United Kingdom Reporting Standards, the Charities Act 2011 and the Accounting and Reporting by Charities Statement of Recommended Practice (SORP 2005).

Basis of Preparation

As permitted by SORP 2005 the trustees have adapted the heading used to describe Incoming Resources and Resources Expended within the Statement of Financial Activities when presenting the results for the year.

INCOMING RESOURCES

Incoming resources are recognised when received or receivable by the charity. Income is derived from fund raising activities and donations. Grants are recognised on receipt or award unless, in the judgement of the trustees, conditions attached to the grant make it improbable that they will be received.

RESTRICTED FUNDS

Restricted funds are to be used for a specific purpose as laid down by the donor. Expenditure which meets these criteria is identified against the fund.

UNRESTRICTED FUNDS

Unrestricted funds are incoming resources received or receivable generated for charitable purposes and available for use at the discretion of the trustees in furtherance of the general objectives of the charity and have not been designated for other purposes.

Paid Employees

The charity employs a Project Co-ordinator, a part-time Finance Manager, a part-time Finance Assistant, a part-time Office Manager, a part-time Benefits Advisor, a part-time Integration Officer and two Immigration Advisors (both of these staff also work as part-time Employment Advisors). These posts are funded through restricted grants.

Trustee Expenses

There were no payments or reimbursements made to any trustees during the financial year.

Fixed Assets

Assets with a useful life of more than two years are capitalised at cost and depreciated over their useful life. Depreciation on computer equipment is charged at 33% on a straight line basis.

Fixed Assets funded by capital grants are capitalised and a restricted capital reserve created. The reserve is reduced by the depreciation charge.

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2024 (CONT'D...)

2. Property & Operating Leases

i) Operating Lease Commitments - Nil.

ii) The annual commitment for the land and buildings lease amounts to £9,688 (£10,059 in 2022/23) where the term remaining is between one and five years. There are no further lease commitments. Rent charges have increased for the current year.

3. Income from Grants, Donations and Legacies:

	Unrestricted Funds	Restricted Funds	Total 2024	Total 2023
	£	£	£	£
Donations from other charities, companies	35,000	115,975	150,975	98,182
Donations from trusts, individuals and similar	3,492	33,152	36,644	40,644
	38,492	149,127	187,619	138,826

4. Resources Expended

	Unrestricted Funds	Restricted Funds	Total 2024	Total 2023
	£	£	£	£
Staff payroll costs	0	130,722	130,722	115,174
Volunteer expenses & training	494	0	494	394
Staff travel & training	1,313	0	1,313	840
Social worker	1,720	0	1,720	2,549
Rent, rates & insurance (Note 2)	1,294	8,886	10,180	13,135
IT, telephone & internet	0	4,561	4,561	4,824
Utilities, cleaning & maintenance.	(514)	0	(514)	4,204
Stationery, printing & postage	1,604	0	1,604	1,943
Publications & subscriptions	912	0	912	309
Web & promotional costs	50	0	50	179
Client outings & welfare costs	62	3,430	3,492	2,587
Depreciation	630	693	1,323	1,335
Governance costs	39	0	39	572
Other expenses	16,159	3,518	19,677	17,235
Total	23,763	151,810	175,573	165,280

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2024 (CONT'D...)

5. Fixed Assets	Computer Equipment
Cost	£
At 1 April 2023	14,871
Additions	<u>1,661</u>
At 31 March 2024	<u>16,532</u>
Depreciation	
At 1 April 2023	13,941
Charge for year	<u>1,324</u>
At 31 March 2024	<u>15,265</u>
Net Book Value	
At 31 March 2023	<u>930</u>
At 31 March 2024	<u>1,267</u>

6. Debtors and prepayments due within one year	2024	2023
	£	£
Debtors	0	0
Prepayments and accrued income	<u>30,316</u>	<u>21,910</u>
	<u>30,316</u>	<u>21,910</u>

7. Creditors and accruals due within one year	2024	2023
	£	£
Creditors	30	30
Deferred income	0	0
Accruals	<u>7,544</u>	<u>10,898</u>
	<u>7,574</u>	<u>10,928</u>

8. Staff Costs	2024	2023
	£	£
Gross wages	121,366	107,042
Employers National Insurance costs	8,535	6,745
Employers National Insurance rebate	(5,000)	(5,000)
Pension costs	<u>5,821</u>	<u>6,387</u>
	<u>130,722</u>	<u>115,174</u>

During the year BRASS employed; one full-time employee and six part-time employees.
No employee earned more than £60,000.

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2024 (CONT'D...)

9. Restricted Income Funds as at March 31 2024

Fund Name	Purpose and restriction
BIG Lottery (i)	The project is partly funding the following posts - the Co-ordinator, the Office Manager, Benefits Adviser and the Complicated Caseworker.
BIG Lottery (i) (a)	The project has also received lottery funding to support beneficiary events this year in the sum of £9,850.
Harpur Trust (ii)	A further two year grant was awarded by Harpur Trust to support the part of the salary costs of the part-time posts of the Finance Manager & Finance Assistant, as well as the Integration Officer salary costs. Final instalment of this grant to be paid on completion of the end of grant report due August 2024.
EELGA (iii)	These restricted funds are funding the Employment Support work.
Beds & Luton Community Fund	During the current year this money has funded overheads such as rent.
Panacea Trust	This money has funded part of the welfare worker and immigration worker posts, application is pending to The Panacea Trust for additional funding.
Beds Charitable Trust	This £5,000 was previously treated as restricted funding. Only recently it came to light the money was to be used for unrestricted purposes. Therefore the money was transferred to unrestricted funds.

10. Movement of Major Funds

Fund Names	Balance at 1st April 2023 £	Incoming resources £	Outgoing resources £	Transfers £	Balance at 31st March 2024 £
Other	47,004	41,792	(23,763)	5,000	70,033
Unrestricted Funds	47,004	41,792	(23,763)	5,000	70,033
EELGA (iii)	23,942	40,500	(34,857)	0	29,585
Bedford & Luton Community Fund	0	10,000	(7,622)	0	2,378
Beds Charitable Trust	5,000	0	0	(5,000)	0
Big Lottery (i)	0	65,625	(65,625)	0	0
Big Lottery (i) (a)	0	9,850	(3,430)	0	6,420
Harpur Trust (ii)	5,926	20,180	(28,209)	0	(2,103)
Panacea Trust	10,103	-	(11,373)	0	(1,270)
Small restricted grants	1,750	2,972	0	0	4,722
	46,721	149,127	(151,116)	(5,000)	39,732
Restricted capital reserve	854	0	(694)	0	160
Restricted Funds	47,575	149,127	(151,810)	(5,000)	39,892
Total Funds	94,579	190,919	(175,573)	0	109,925

Accounts



Annual Report

2023

(April 2022 – March 2023)

**'A world where refugees and asylum seekers
are included, accepted and supported by
society'**

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Reference and Administrative Details

Charity name	Bedfordshire Refugee and Asylum Seeker Support (BRASS)
Registered Charity Number	1096874
OISC Number	N200100432
Office address	27b Tavistock Street Bedford, MK40 2RB

Staff

Brian Cunningham - Coordinator
Andrea Tulloch - Benefits Adviser, Integration Officer (from December 2022)
Helena Maddock - Immigration & Employment Adviser
Jon Howton - Finance Officer
Pat Porter - Admin Assistant
Rani Sheemar - Finance Manager
Sharifullah Dorani - Immigration & Employment Adviser

Volunteers

Andrea Jones	Kathy Mortimer
Anne Shortley	Lindsey Coldwell
Brenda Betts	Liz Turner
Cathy Wood	Mahmoud El Sayed
Clare Ball	Michael Barber
David Porter	Nicola Lindsay
David Thomas	Patricia Porter
Gordon James	Sabina Billing
Helena Maddock	Sally Hilliard
Jane Marriott	Sharifullah Dorani
John Esam	Sidney Miller
Joanna Clark	Sue Horn
John Watkins	

Trustees

Morris Johns (Chair)	Cathy Moorhouse
Victoria Hilliard (Vice Chair)	James Biggs
Sanja Radic (Secretary)	Jo Tester
Cassandra Howes	

Structure, Governance and Management

Governing Document

BRASS is a registered charity governed by a constitution that was adopted on 1st October 1999 and then revised on 18th September 2002 and 5th March 2003. BRASS is a non-political, voluntary organisation, established for the benefit of refugees and asylum seekers in the County of Bedfordshire to assist in the relief of poverty, hardship or distress.

Organisational Structure

BRASS employs 1 full-time member of staff; a Project Co-ordinator overseeing day to day business. and a Resettlement worker supporting Syrian and Afghan Refugees who have been resettled in Bedford as part of the government's resettlement programme. We also employ a number of part time staff; a Benefits Adviser, 2 Immigration Advisers, 2 Employment Advisers, an Integration Officer (from December 2022), a Finance Manager, a Finance Officer and an office Manager. Staff are supported by a team of dedicated volunteers, making our services excellent value for money. Services are delivered from a town centre, local government owned property leased by BRASS. A board of skilled and experienced trustees drawn from the local community oversee and govern services.

Recruitment and Appointment of Trustees

BRASS recognises that the recruitment and selection of new trustees can strongly influence our future effectiveness. The organisation aims to follow good practice in this field as well as the provisions of our constitution. All BRASS trustees are elected at the Annual General Meeting or are co-opted. When looking to recruit new trustees, the committee will attempt to fill any gaps in skills, knowledge and experience of our current trustees and reflect the diversity of the communities in which we operate. We will use the most appropriate ways of recruiting new trustees, including local networks and advertising. We will prepare role descriptions for trustees, ensure that all potential trustees meet all eligibility criteria and ask all potential trustees about any possible conflicts of interest.

All trustee nominations are presented at the Annual General Meeting or the next Executive Committee. They will then be invited to meet with the chairperson to discuss their nomination and this discussion will be recorded on their nomination paper and then, once accepted, their name and details will be given to the Charities Commission.

Relationships with Other Organisations

BRASS believes that by building capacity through partnership working we can facilitate sustainability of service provision. The work of BRASS complements other services through the co-ordinator's involvement with The Equalities and New Migration Partnership and the Bedfordshire Advice Forum – local multi-

agency forums where issues are raised, information exchanged and partnership solutions explored. BRASS is a key participant in the organisation of the annual Bedford Refugee Week which holds events to raise awareness of the issues facing refugees and asylum seekers.

BRASS has strong working relationships with local organisations so that individuals can get support from the organisation best placed to provide it. Luton Law Centre has qualified solicitors and case workers who take referrals from BRASS and provide telephone support to BRASS advisers. There is cross referral of clients between BRASS and the Citizens Advice Bureau and the Polish British Integration Centre. BRASS makes referrals to the local MP Mohammad Yasin who helps with representations to the Home Office for specific cases. Referrals are received from the Social Care Team, which is responsible for unaccompanied under-18 asylum seekers, for both advice at the drop-in and English tuition. Community Voluntary Service (CVS) provides a regular supply of enthusiastic and committed volunteers and Bedford Borough Council supports BRASS and contributes to Refugee Week.

BRASS works in partnership with both local and national charities. Advice and support are provided by the Refugee Council, which is the largest refugee agency in the UK. BRASS is a referral organisation for clients requiring provisions via the Bedford Foodbank.

Supporting the local voluntary sector and working towards some financial self-sustainability has become an important part of the organisational ethic.

Risk Management

The main risk again this year has been Covid and the earlier part of the year meant continuing with telephone advice with face to face meetings only when necessary and with Covid measures in place including plastic screens, face masks, sanitisers, social distancing and good ventilation and we had to much reduce our social activities. Towards the beginning of the year, a cautious reopening of services commenced. We were fully functioning again for most of the year and continue with safety measures such as good air circulation in place

We ensure that our health and safety policy, fire risk assessment and fire safety management plan are regularly reviewed and updated. The building and our services are appropriately insured to safeguard the organisation and volunteers with the tutoring project are subject to DBS checks in order to protect our clients. Our drop-in advice service is regulated by the Office of the Immigration Services Commission (OISC) and we are regularly audited.

As with other small charities, BRASS is affected by external factors, particularly in terms of the economy and legal changes affecting asylum seekers and refugees. The economic situation nationally continues to affect fundraising and BRASS has done well to secure a 5 year lottery grant. BRASS continues to seek and secure other grants which allow us to maintain and expand our services. BRASS has had members of staff successfully qualify for OISC level 1. They are supervised by a member of staff qualified to level 2. In addition, it is important for BRASS that we are able to provide volunteers with training and progression

in return for their commitment. BRASS is also affected by media coverage of refugees and asylum seekers. This can result in increased interest in helping our clients, but it can also have a negative impact when prejudice against refugees and asylum seekers increases.

Internally, BRASS has a group of committed trustees with skills and experience that can help with the development of the organisation. The National Lottery Community Fund grant provides longer term stability for our staff and the ability to expand the number of staff we employ and therefore the capacity to expand our services. Our success in fundraising also presents some challenges as many trusts will only fund an organisation for a limited time, which means we have to be increasingly proactive in seeking funders. We are fortunate to have a good number of committed volunteers, enabling us to provide reliable and high-quality services beyond our drop-in advice service.

The organisation has a policy to hold financial reserves of six months, a level which we have now achieved and exceeded.



Message from the Chair of Trustees

Dear Trustees, Supporters, and Friends of BRASS,

I am pleased to present the Annual Report for 2022/23 on behalf of BRASS. As the Chair of Trustees, I am humbled and honoured to provide an overview of our organisation's activities, achievements, and contributions over the past year.

BRASS remains committed to its mission of providing support, hope, and opportunities for refugees and asylum seekers who have sought refuge in Bedford. The year presented numerous challenges, but our dedicated team and generous supporters have continued to make a significant impact in the lives of those in need.



Key Highlights and Achievements:

1. **Advocacy and Awareness:** BRASS remains actively involved in advocacy efforts to raise awareness about the refugees' issues, and advocate for better policies and support systems for refugees. Our campaigns reached a broader audience, resulting in increased public understanding and support, particularly in the Sharnbrook area, where there was concern about possible local hostility to the presence of a new asylum hotel in the village.
2. **English Language Lessons:** Our education programs have continued to thrive, ensuring access to quality lessons for the refugees and asylum seekers.
3. **Social Programme:** We organised a variety of events which encouraged the refugees and local Bedfordians to meet each other; for example, in a friendly football competition, which allowed refugees and local teams to compete with each other. Other social events, like a coach trip to Wicksteed Park, provided the families with rare opportunities to unwind in relaxed surroundings.
4. **Advisory Sessions.** The drop-in days have been expanded to provide more opportunities for the refugees to come and seek advice on various issues.

Our success would not have been possible without the dedication of our staff, volunteers, and the unwavering support of our donors, partners, and trustees. We extend our heartfelt gratitude to each of you for your contributions to our cause.

Challenges and Future Plans: While we have achieved significant milestones, challenges remain. The ongoing refugee crisis, compounded by a sometimes hostile media, requires us to remain vigilant and responsive. In the coming year, we aim to:

- Strengthen partnerships with other organizations to enhance our impact.
- Continue advocating for refugee rights and improved policies.
- Ensure the efficient and transparent use of resources to maximize our effectiveness.

In conclusion, I want to emphasize that the work we do at BRASS is not possible without your support. Together, we have made a profound difference in the lives of refugees, providing them with hope and opportunities for a better future. As we look ahead, let us remain steadfast in our commitment to this noble cause.



Thank you for your unwavering support and dedication to BRASS. We invite you to join us in the journey ahead as we strive to make a positive impact on the lives of refugees in Bedford.

Sincerely,
Morris Johns

Morris Johns, Chair of Trustees

Co-ordinator's Report

The most significant change in service for us this year was the re-starting of drop-in advice in person having done mostly by phone during Covid. We expanded drop-in hours from Tuesday and Wednesday to opening Thursday also. But I will let Sharif tell you more about that.



We also started having social work placement students again. Melissa and Veronica helped triage at drop-in, which is great for them to have experience with clients, helping them with simpler matters also. They also helped with social activities including updating our myth buster leaflets to give out at our market stall during refugee week and helped organise our 5-a-side football tournament which went ahead for the first time post Covid. Thanks to the BPHA, Bedfordshire Police, PBIC, social workers and to refugee teams who attended and referees and other helpers who came despite the rain!



We had a new Integration officer start in late 2022. Andrea is also our Benefits advisor. She is now looking after our tutors and helping with social activities. So our tutors are much more organised but I will let her tell you about that and lots more social activities in the future. We had a coach trip to Wicksteed park this summer. Not our usual Hunstanton seaside trip we considered the long journey was still a Covid risk so we went somewhere closer. We also had a very successful Christmas party this year with over 100 attending

Our usual client groups were added to this year by Ukrainians, around 40 to 50 mostly with our Employment project which has been a great success. We have heard that project, which was supposed to end in December is continuing with some further funding. I will let Helena tell you more about that.

Later in the year we heard rumours of a new Asylum hotel in nearby Sharnbrook. We visited the site and look forward to working with the predicted 30 asylum seeking families there and local residents some of whom are BRASS volunteers and have expressed an interest in helping.

Finally, the refugee family reunion project run by the legal department at the university of Bedford continues to run under the BRASS umbrella. There can be few better things than reuniting refugees with the families they had to leave behind.



Brian Cunningham, BRASS Co-ordinator

Service Updates

Drop-in Report

For all of the reporting year, our drop-in sessions were open on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays. We also continued to solve clients' matters through telephone appointments if they were unable to attend. We managed to help our clients with a variety of matters, including those relating to immigration, benefits, employment, (social) housing, utility bills, debts, professional driving theory licence, taxi/private hire driver applications, Uber Eats/Just Eat driver applications, school/nursery, to name but a few. As we continue to see more and more clients, we will continue to open three days a week.

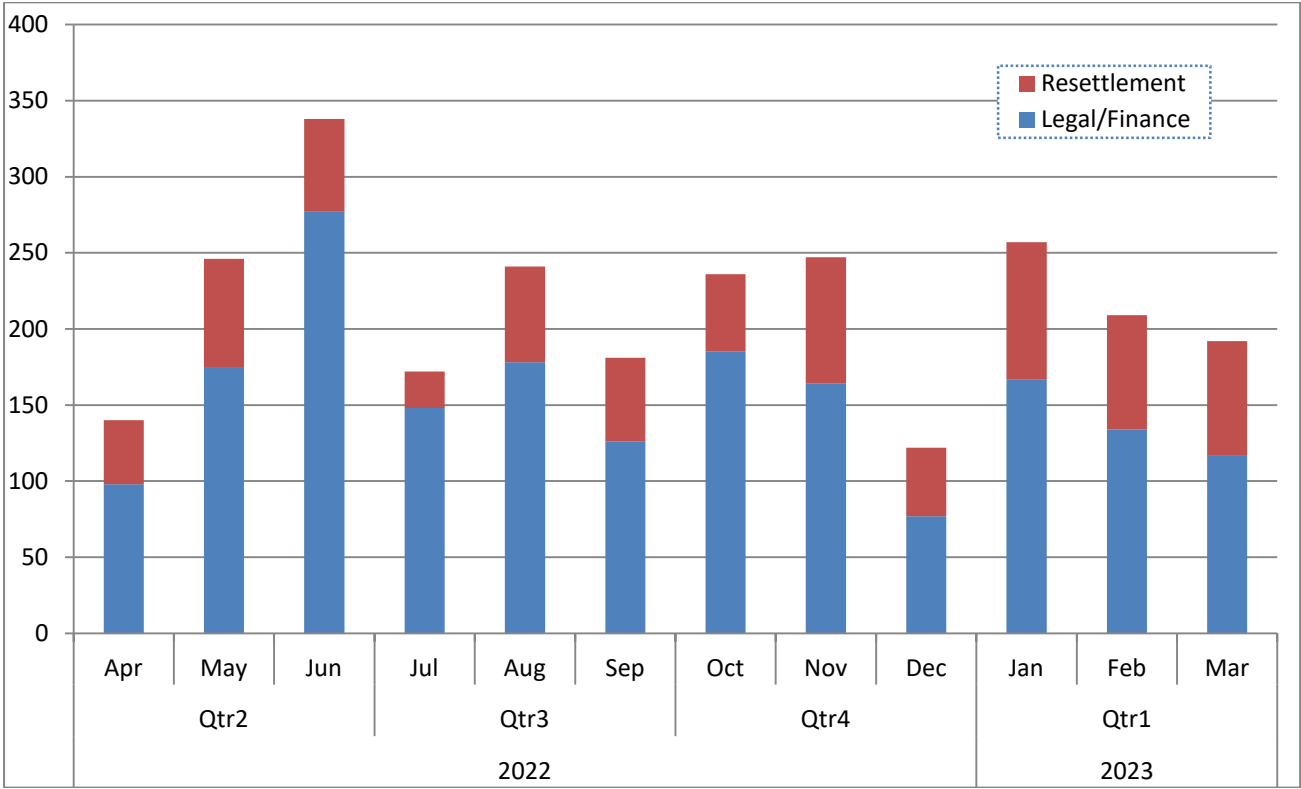
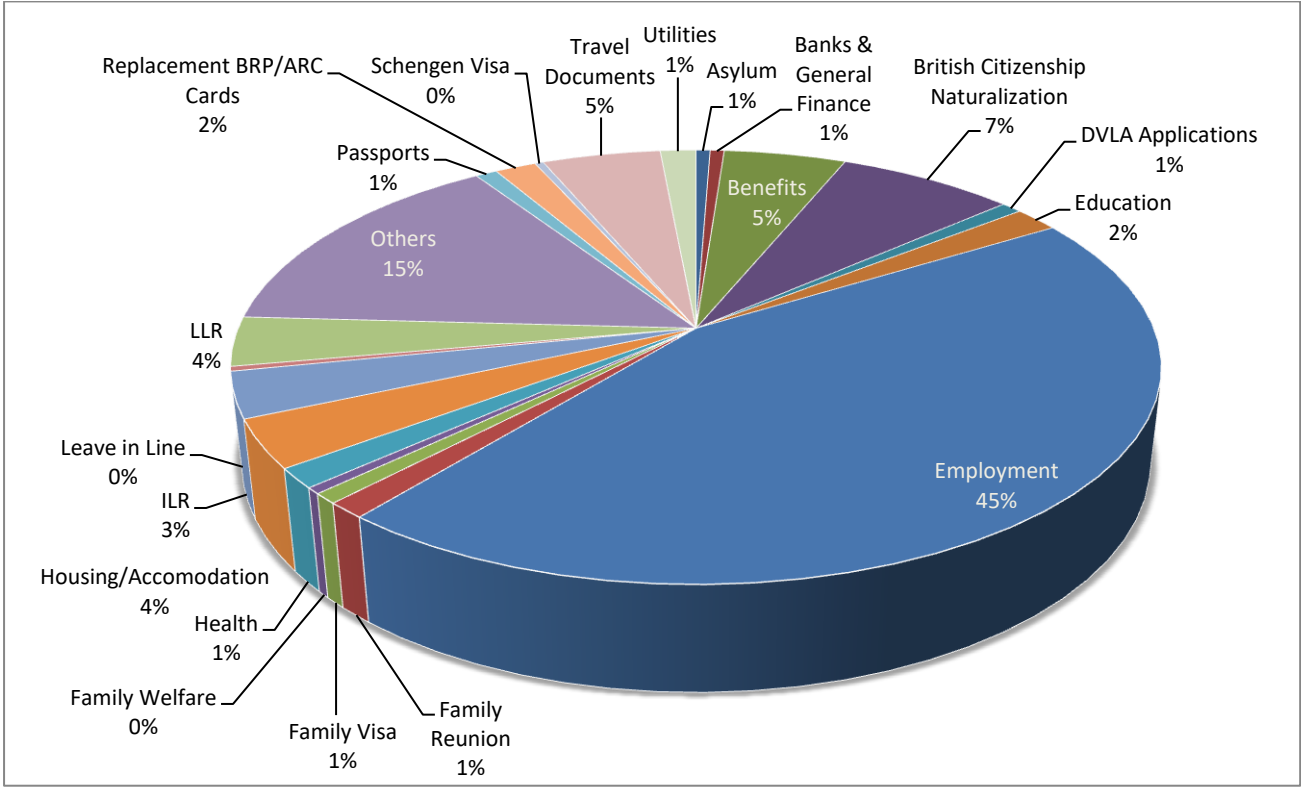
As my colleague, Helena Maddock, elaborates on this, we registered more than 80 clients for our Employment Project and sent them to a variety of courses.

We have two immigration Advisors, Helena Maddock and myself. We were very busy this year and managed to help hundreds of clients with their immigration matters, including applying for Schengen visas. Schengen visas were much more in demand this reporting year because Brexit introduced more restrictions where our clients with limited leave had to apply for a Schengen visa to travel to Europe. Furthermore, we provide a comprehensive approach when it comes to immigration matters: we help our clients fill in the application form, book a UKVCAS appointment, and sort out their supporting documents.

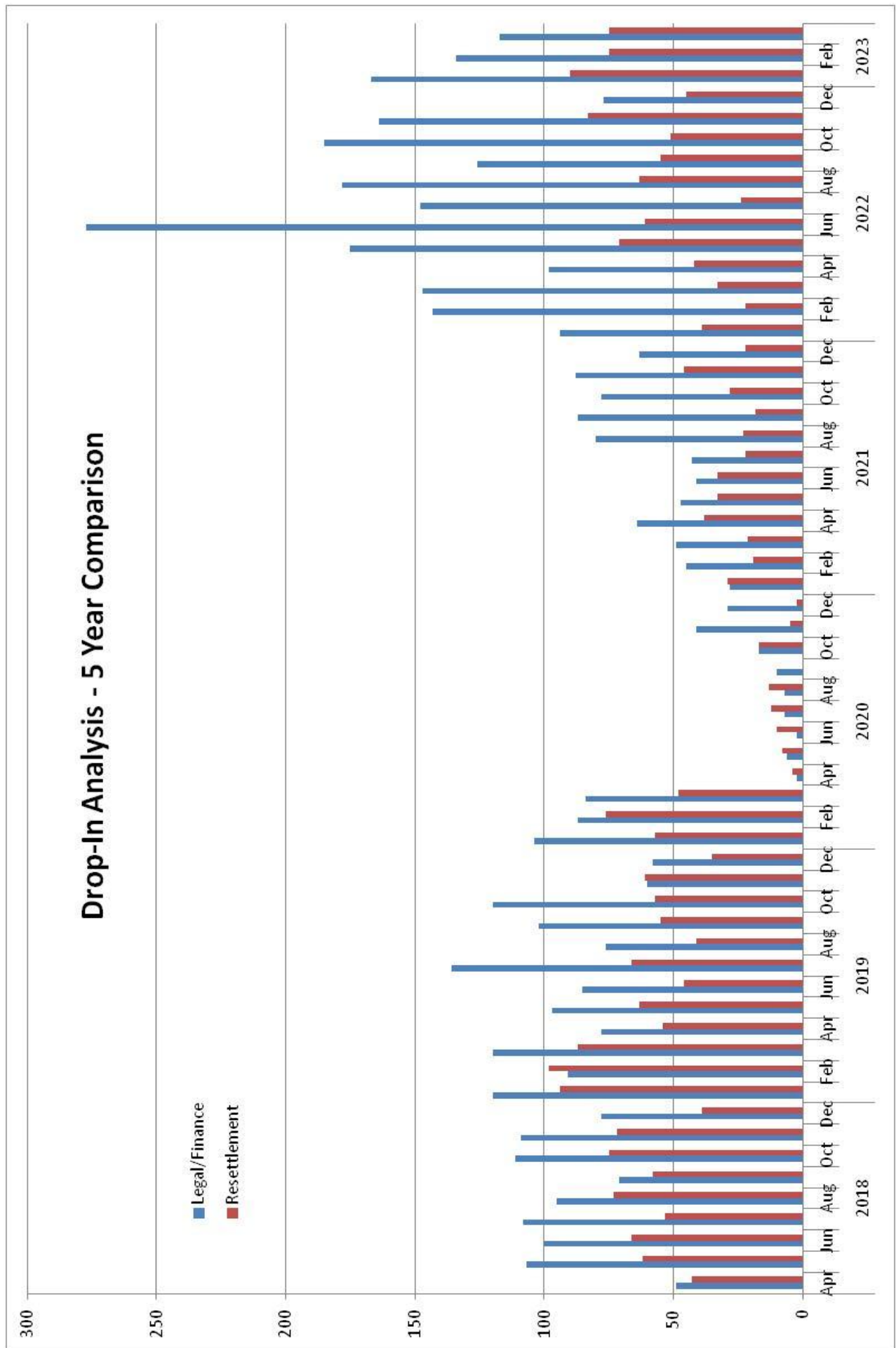
All in all, we supported hundreds of clients this reporting year. We would have not been able to do so without the support of our volunteers and social work placement students. They played a crucial part, and BRASS is grateful to them.

Sharifullah Dorani, Immigration and Employment Adviser

Drop-in Enquiries 2022-2023



Drop-in Enquiries 5 Year Comparison 2018-2023



Employment Project

In the year starting in April 2022 we registered 83 new clients for the employment project, bringing our total in March 2023 to 172 employment clients. The original end date for the project was December 2022 but we have been able to continue, with different course providers, up until September 2023. Sharif and myself work together on the employment project. We are delighted that we exceeded our targets and consequently our partners were pleased to extend the period of the project. This will continue in a different format for at least another 6 months.

We have been able to refer a lot of our clients to a variety of courses (more than 100 referrals), including driving theory and IELTS, as well as low level English courses on topics such as how to use the NHS. We have also referred clients to MENTA, a business mentoring organisation and they have helped clients who are interested in becoming self-employed or starting their own business. We had more than 30 clients' overseas qualifications recognised here by ENIC. We continue to help our clients with CV writing, finding suitable courses for them, helping with job applications and other research for them.

We have had very good feedback from our clients about the services we have been able to provide such as "I would like to express my deep gratitude to BRASS...you very kindly provided me with the things which I really needed."

Helena Maddock, Immigration and Employment Adviser

Tuition

Since starting in the role as Integration Officer, one of the biggest tasks was to get all of the volunteer tutors together to get some feedback on how they felt lessons were going. Based on the level of English that some of the students were arriving with, it was necessary to review and update learning resources. Joanna Clark, a BRASS volunteer, helped organise the resources and we were able to purchase additional resources from some fund raising organised by Kathy Mortimer, another BRASS volunteer.

The majority of students come to us from local authority care/ hostels that look after Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC). They are children and young people who have been separated from their parents or carers and are seeking asylum in the UK.

Our Afghan women's group has grown from one day a week to two days a week.

We have also had students from some countries that we have never worked with before including Ukraine. So, we have increased the number of volunteer tutors to accommodate the new students.

They are still progressing and generally use our English classes to support any learning they may receive at college or before being given a place at college, it has been very interesting scheduling all the tutors and students to rooms.

Andrea Tullock, Integration Officer

Allotment

BRASS continues to support a Syrian family at an allotment plot in Queens Park, Bedford.



Objectives and Activities

Vision

A world where refugees and asylum seekers are included, accepted and supported by society.

Mission Statement

BRASS is an established charity working to empower, inform and support refugees and asylum seekers and to protect rights with an aim to develop independence and involvement in UK society.

Strategic Objectives 2020-2023

The trustees have reviewed BRASS' strategic objectives and made some changes. These objectives will form the basis of planning our activities over the next three years. We plan to use these to inform annual targets to ensure we remain focussed on our strategic objectives.

- 1) Sustainable development of BRASS as an organisation to serve the interests and needs of refugees and asylum seekers and their families.
- 2) To enhance the ability of refugees and asylum seekers to understand and navigate UK procedures, processes and systems and promoting change to create a fairer system.
- 3) Provide opportunities for refugees and asylum seekers to increase independence, integration and confidence through learning and social activities.
- 4) Encourage participation of refugees and asylum seekers in the development and management of BRASS.
- 5) To build partnerships with other agencies, to cross refer clients, share information and campaign for the welfare of refugees and asylum seekers locally and nationally.
- 6) To inform and educate the community of Bedford and foster relationships between refugees and asylum seekers and the wider community.

Services

BRASS currently offers three drop-in advice sessions staffed by volunteers and BRASS staff - on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays, 10am-2pm, with fewer sessions conducted via telephone than in the earlier months of the year. These are accredited by the Office of the Immigration Services Commissioner (OISC) to give immigration advice. Through funding by the National Lottery Community Fund and the East of England LGA, BRASS employs a specialist benefits adviser, 2 employment advisers and 2 immigration advisers. We also support the

Refugee Legal Assistance project run by the University of Bedford on its Luton Campus on Tuesday evenings during term time, which specialises in refugee family reunions. The project has, over recent years, supported over 55 families.

Our tutoring programme matches volunteer tutors with refugees and asylum seekers who want to learn or improve their English language skills. This service is offered in the community, at the BRASS offices and online. BRASS provides small group tuition in numeracy and preparing for the Life in the UK test

Our allotment plot continues to be worked by client volunteers. Whilst our popular annual summer trip to the seaside was, sadly, not possible this year, our coach trip to Wicksteed Park for clients was oversubscribed.

BRASS plays a leading role in Refugee Week each year, organising a variety of events to promote refugee issues, this year's events revolved around raising awareness via our market stall with The Higgins, myth-busting leaflets, suggested reading Book Lists and installations at St Paul's Church.

Public Benefit

BRASS provides a range of services to support refugees and asylum seekers in the Bedford community and further afield. Free immigration advice is in short supply in this area and without the service provided by BRASS through phone and appointment advice sessions, many refugees and asylum seekers would be left to tackle the often complex immigration system alone. Advice is also provided on a range of resettlement issues including employment, housing, education and benefits. This advice enables our clients to better integrate into society and to learn to manage their own affairs independently. BRASS also provides a dedicated resettlement worker to support Syrian and Afghan refugees who are resettled in Bedford, supporting them to settle and integrate into our community.

For those who want to improve their English, BRASS' tutoring project matches volunteer tutors with clients. This relationship can often provide improved self-confidence and support with other aspects of integration. We also run classes for those wishing to improve their numeracy and those preparing for the Life in the UK test. The BRASS allotment is now quite well established, providing a sense of community to clients, as well as providing asylum seekers (who are not allowed to work) activities to fill their time as well as fresh produce to take home.

BRASS is working to inform and educate the public on issues around immigration and asylum. Asylum seekers are a stigmatised group and through our work with Refugee Week and our coordinator giving talks to groups in the Bedford area, we are encouraging the public to look differently at refugees and asylum seekers and to see the positive contribution they make to our society.

Achievements and Performance

Progress towards Strategic Objectives 2020-2023

We have measured our progress on our previous strategic objectives as the review took place at the end of the reporting year.

Sustainable development of BRASS as an organisation to serve the interests and needs of refugees and asylum seekers.

BRASS' advice sessions, our core service, is provided mainly in person with face to face meetings with clients with appropriate Covid measures in place. We also continue to provide specialist benefits advice. Through our VPRS resettlement worker, we support families, in conjunction with Bedford Borough Council, who are resettled in Bedford from refugee camps in the Middle East. Our English Language project has been boosted by the appointment of an Integration officer to run the tuition service.

The BRASS allotment continues to offer a great benefit to clients.

To enhance the ability of refugees and asylum seekers to understand UK procedures, processes and systems.

The UK immigration system can be confusing even for those of us who deal with it on a regular basis, so navigating it can be near impossible for those who are new to the country and may have limited English. Through our OISC registered drop-in immigration advice sessions, BRASS helps refugees and asylum seekers to deal with these complex systems. Advice is also provided around other non-immigration issues such as housing, employment and finance to aid integration. We are able to provide specialist advice through our immigration advisers, employment advisers and benefits adviser. Our popular English Language Tuition also gives refugees and asylum seekers the skills to better navigate British systems and our classes in numeracy and preparing for the Life in the UK test also aid integration.

Increasing independence and confidence through learning and social activities.

Our tuition project provides one-to-one/group tuition to those who wish to improve their English, numeracy and preparing for the Life in the UK test. It is hoped that this will enable them to become more independent and better able to integrate into society. Our allotment provides a place for our clients to relax, meet new people and grow their own food.

To raise awareness in wider society of issues faced by refugees and asylum seekers.

BRASS is always heavily involved with activities in Bedford celebrating Refugee Week. Myth busting leaflets are given out to members of the public and events are held at various venues around the town including a very popular football tournament and fun day in one of Bedford's public parks. We also had a publicity raising market stall where we distributed Myth busting leaflets. BRASS' coordinator gives talks to local groups and the feedback forms completed at the end of these talks indicate that perceptions of refugees and asylum seekers have been changed by what they have heard. We regularly publish positive stories about our clients and information about refugees and the asylum system on our website and Facebook page.

Encourage participation of refugees and asylum seekers in the development and management of BRASS.

BRASS continually encourages clients and former clients to become involved in BRASS, whether through attending groups and activities, becoming a volunteer or joining the committee. A former client is now on our committee and some of our volunteers have previously used our services. We have also provided social work placements to a number of students, some of whom are from a refugee background.

To build partnerships with other agencies, to cross refer clients, share information and campaign on behalf of the wellbeing of refugees and asylum seekers locally and nationally.

BRASS works with other agencies in a variety of ways. BRASS works with many local charities and networks. Our coordinator is involved with The New Migration Partnership, Bedford Borough Diversity Network and the Bedford Advice forum – local multi-agency forums where issues are raised, information exchanged and partnership solutions explored. BRASS is a key participant in the organisation of the annual Bedford Refugee Week which holds events to raise awareness of the issues facing refugees and asylum seekers.

Referrals are received from Children's Services which is responsible for unaccompanied Asylum seekers under the age of 18. The Community Voluntary Service (CVS) provides a regular supply of enthusiastic and committed volunteers and the Charity continues to receive invaluable support from the Bedford Borough.

BRASS has been very involved with Refugee Week in Bedford for many years. The aim of Refugee Week is to raise awareness of the issues faced by refugees and asylum seekers and the positive contributions they make to British society. Covid has had a serious effect upon the level of engagement in the past but we are back working with the local community in terms of giving talks to various groups in the Bedford area to change perceptions of these issues and gathering feedback from those who attend to assess changing attitudes.

Fundraising activities

We would like to thank the following organisations from whom we have received grants over the past years

The National Lottery Community Fund
Bedford Borough Council
The Beds and Luton Community Foundation
Beatrice Laing Trust
WW4R1

Harpur Trust
Wixamtree Trust
Panacea Charitable Trust
East of England LGA

We would also like to thank all of the individual donors who support BRASS through one off and regular donations.

BRASS would like to thank our fundraiser Karen Mayoh for her continued hard work and support.

Future Plans and the challenges ahead

Our services have been steadily resuming this year as we came out of Covid. We are now helping clients in numbers higher than pre Covid.

We have obtained a new five year grant with the National Lottery to help with our long term stability and continue to work other local funders.

BRASS will continue to prioritise the needs of our clients by providing good quality, reliable services. In order to safeguard BRASS and ensure that our vital services continue to be available, we will work to ensure good governance to maintain stability. BRASS is fortunate to be in a secure financial position, with more than 6 months of reserves. There are bound to be other challenges ahead, but we are confident that BRASS is well placed to face them.

Getting Involved with BRASS

Volunteers are often needed for our drop-in, English tutoring and the allotment.

If you are interested in becoming involved with BRASS as a volunteer, please contact Co-ordinator Brian Cunningham on 01234 211381 or brian@brass27b.org. For further information on any of our work, please check our website www.brassbedford.org.uk and Facebook pages www.facebook.com/brassbedford and www.facebook.com/brassallotment



Charity Registration Number: 1096874

**BEDFORDSHIRE REFUGEE AND ASYLUM SEEKER SUPPORT GROUP
(BRASS)**

TRUSTEES REPORT AND ACCOUNTS
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2023

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LEGAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION

CHARITY NAME: Bedfordshire Refugee and Asylum Seeker Support Group

OTHER NAME CHARITY IS KNOWN BY: BRASS

REGISTERED CHARITY NUMBER: 1096874

CHARITY'S PRINCIPAL ADDRESS:

27B Tavistock Street
Bedford
MK40 2RB

NAMES OF THE CHARITY TRUSTEES WHO MANAGE THE CHARITY

Victoria Hilliard
Cathy Moorhouse
Morris Johns - Chair from 3rd July 2020
Sanja Radic
James Biggs
Jo Tester
Cass Howes

PROJECT CO-ORDINATOR

Brian Cunningham

BANKERS

RBS\\
Bedford Branch
15-19 Mill Street
Bedford
MK40 3EU

Main current account held since May 2021 :-

The Co-operative Bank
Delf House
Skelmersdale
WN8 6WT

REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES

REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2023

The trustees of the charity present their report together with the financial statements for the year ended 31 March 2023, prepared in accordance with the Charities Act 2011 and the Accounting and Reporting by Charities Statement of Recommended Practice (SORP 2005).

From April 2022 to March 2023 finance meetings and trustee meetings were held quarterly, attended by the Chair, Executive Committee members and staff.

BRASS employs a Project Co-ordinator to oversee day to day business and to provide specialist advice, and full-time Syrian Family Support Officer and part-time Benefits Adviser, Integration Officer, Immigration Adviser, Finance Manager and Finance Officer. Much of the charity's work is undertaken by a team of dedicated volunteers.

OBJECTIVES AND REVIEW OF ACTIVITIES

The charity is an established non-political, voluntary organisation working to empower, inform and support refugees and asylum seekers and their families, protect their rights and enable them to develop their independence and involvement in UK society. Specifically the charity was established for the benefit of refugees and asylum seekers in the County of Bedfordshire to assist in the relief of poverty, hardship or distress. Services are delivered from a local government owned property in Bedford town centre which is leased by BRASS. Much work in the previous year was done by phone and virtually from our offices and by staff from home due to Covid. From early in this year we were back in the office seeing people under Covid conditions by appointment, by the end of this year we had returned to full drop in advice as well.

BRASS continues to have strong working relationships with local organisations providing advice so that individuals can get support from the organisations best placed to offer it. Luton Law Centre and Luton law firms have qualified solicitors and case workers who take referrals from BRASS and provide telephone support to BRASS advisors. BRASS also works with the University of Bedfordshire Law Department to assist refugees with family reunification applications. BRASS works with the Citizens Advice Bureau to cross refer clients and makes referrals to the local MP who, in specific cases, helps with representations to the Home Office.

Referrals are received from Children's Services which is responsible for unaccompanied asylum seekers under the age of 18. The Community Voluntary Service (CVS) provides a regular supply of enthusiastic and committed volunteers and the charity continues to receive invaluable support from the Bedford Borough Council who run the New Migration Partnership of which the BRASS co-ordinator is chair. The co-ordinator is also on the steering group of the Bedford Advice Forum. Bedfordshire Rural Communities Charity who previously supported our tutoring project by carrying out the relevant DBS checks, but we are now able to do these for ourselves.

BRASS works in partnership with both local and national charities. Advice and support are provided by the Refugee Council, which is the largest refugee agency in the UK, the Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants (who also offer immigration advice training courses) and Migrant Help. BRASS is also a registered referrer for Bedford Food Bank.

BRASS seeks to support the local voluntary sector and work towards financial self-sustainability. It leases its offices in Bedford town centre.

BRASS is focused on working in partnership with other organisations to share knowledge and skills, prevent duplication, maximise effectiveness, cut costs and share facilities. On behalf of the trustees of BRASS I can confirm that in carrying out our financial review we have considered and complied with our duty to have due regard to the Charity Commission's guidance on public benefit.

REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES (CONT'D...)

ACHIEVEMENTS AND PERFORMANCE

During the last financial year BRASS has supported over 400 clients. We seek to support our client group's changing needs; the changes to the Benefits system and ever increasing complexity of immigration applications has increased demands for our services. BRASS now receives funding from the Big Lottery and will provide specialist advice through a Complex Caseworker for immigration matters and a Benefits Advisor. We will be able to provide additional social activities through our Integration Officer who started this year funded by the Harpur Trust.

We increased our advice sessions from twice a week to three times a week. However, we also offer appointments with our Benefits Adviser worker and our Immigration Adviser where we feel the need is urgent or can best be addressed in person.

Our social activities have become more active again this year. Our Co-ordinator is still the chair of the Refugee Week steering group, and we had successfully organised a football tournament with refugees and other local teams. We also did a market stall giving out myth busting leaflets. BRASS' allotment is still up and running with both refugees and volunteers attending.

FINANCIAL REVIEW

As in previous years, BRASS is very fortunate to have received funding from various different sources this year.

The Big Lottery continues to fund our Co-ordinator, along with other posts and other running costs for five years.

The Harpur Trust continues its support by helping to fund our Finance Manager and Finance Officer salary costs and most recently an Integration officer. Bedford Borough Council provided continued funding support towards staff costs at the beginning of the year. Money has been used to fund a part-time Benefits Adviser.

We thank Beds and Luton Community Foundation, Panacea Society, Wixamtree Trust and WW4R1 for their continued ongoing support for funding

Total Incoming Resources during the financial year were £142,258, a significant increase on the previous year. This income has been used to provide funding to cover all our existing posts which are all filled and other direct costs and overheads. A large part of the reason for the increase in income is that the new lottery funding came into effect from April 2022. We are delighted to say that the lottery granted us this new funding which started at the beginning of the new financial year and that this funding is for five years which means we will be free from having to put together a new lottery bid for five years. Now that we have successfully secured this funding we now have more time to concentrate on putting in other bids. We are asking for funding over more than one year as we have done in the past. We are awaiting outcome of some of these new bids and are planning others early in the new financial year.

Costs decreased this year by approximately 3% to £165,280 mainly due to the Syrian working coming to close. There has been an increase in some staff hours mainly to support the growing needs of the increasing number of refugees coming into the country.

REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES (CONT'D...)

FINANCIAL REVIEW RESERVES POLICY.

BRASS reserves as at 31st March 2023, were £94,579. Of these funds £47,575 were restricted funds, the remaining £47,004 were unrestricted funds. The Trustee Board have established a policy whereby it aims to maintain sufficient unrestricted funds not invested in tangible fixed assets and not required to meet future budgeted expenditure, being the "free reserves", to support the future growth of the charity and provide sufficient reserves for dealing with possible contingencies such as short-term cessation of project activity or redundancy.

Approved by the trustees and signed on their behalf by:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M. Johns'.

Morris Johns

Chair

Date: 15th September 2023

INDEPENDENT EXAMINER'S REPORT TO THE TRUSTEES OF BEDFORDSHIRE REFUGEE AND ASYLUM SEEKER SUPPORT GROUP

I report on the financial statements of the charity for the year ended 31 March 2023 as set out on pages 7 to 12.

This report is made solely to the charity's trustees, as a body, in accordance with section 145 of the Charities Act 2011 ('the 2011 Act'). My work has been undertaken so that I might state to the charity's trustees those matters I am required to state to them in this report and for no other purpose. To the fullest extent permitted by law, I do not accept or assume responsibility to anyone other than the charity and the charity's trustees as a body, for my work, for this report, or for the opinions I have formed.

Respective responsibilities of trustees and examiner

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

It is my responsibility to:

- * examine the financial statements under section 145 of the 2011 Act;
- * to follow the procedures laid down in the General Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the 2011 Act; and
- * 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 financial statements presented with those records. It also includes consideration of any unusual items or disclosures in the financial statements 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 financial statements present a 'true and fair view' and the report is limited to those matters set out in the statement below.

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 financial statements which accord with the accounting records and comply with the accounting 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 financial statements to be reached.



John Esam
Mayfield Lodge
1 Main Road,
Biddenham
MK40 4BB

Dated: 15th September 2023

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES AS OF 31ST MARCH 2023

Incoming Resources	Note	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	Total 2023 £	Total 2022 £
Grants receivable	3	8,000	90,182	98,182	65,170
Donations and other fund raising activities		3,305	37,339	40,644	52,264
Rental income		0	0	0	0
Investment income		114	0	114	43
Other income		2,968	350	3,318	4,655
Total Incoming Resources		14,387	127,871	142,258	122,132
Resources Expended					
Costs of generating funds		7,950	1500	9,450	10,200
Charitable activities	4	24,544	130,714	155,258	159,969
Governance costs		0	572	572	534
Total Resources Expended		32,494	132,786	165,280	170,703
Net Incoming/ (Outgoing) Resources		(18,107)	(4,915)	(23,022)	(48,571)
Funds brought forward		65,111	52,490	117,601	166,172
Transfers between funds		0	0	0	0
Funds carried forward		47,004	47,575	94,579	117,601

All of the charity's activities derive from continuing operations during the above two periods.

BALANCE SHEET AT 31 MARCH 2023

	Note	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	Total 2023 £	Total 2022 £
Fixed Assets					
Tangible assets	5	76	854	930	2,266
Current Assets					
Debtors and Prepayments	6	1,400	20,510	21,910	9,827
Cash and Bank in hand		45,528	37,139	82,667	114,161
Total Current Assets		46,928	57,649	105,507	123,988
Creditors Amounts falling due within one year	7	0	10,928	10,928	8,653
Net Current Assets		46,928	46,721	94,579	115,335
Net Assets		47,004	47,575	94,579	117,601
Funds of the Charity					
Unrestricted funds	10	46,091	0	46,091	63,617
Restricted funds	10	0	46,721	46,721	50,483
Unrestricted & Restricted capital reserve		76	854	930	2,266
Designated funds		837	0	837	1,235
Total funds		47,004	47,575	94,579	117,601

Trustees' Responsibilities

The trustees acknowledge their responsibility in complying with the requirements of the Charities Commission and confirm that the accounts have been prepared in accordance with Accounting and Reporting by Charities (SORP 2005) and Charities Act 2011.

Approved by the trustees and signed on their behalf by:


.....

Name Morris Johns, Dated 15th September 20223

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2023

1. Accounting Policies

Statement of compliance

The financial statements have been prepared on the basis of historic cost and in accordance with the applicable United Kingdom Reporting Standards, the Charities Act 2011 and the Accounting and Reporting by Charities Statement of Recommended Practice (SORP 2005).

Basis of Preparation

As permitted by SORP 2005 the trustees have adapted the heading used to describe Incoming Resources and Resources Expended within the Statement of Financial Activities when presenting the results for the year.

Incoming Resources

Incoming Resources are recognised when received or receivable by the charity. Income is derived from fund raising activities, donations and the sub-letting of rented property. Grants are recognised on receipt or award unless, in the judgement of the trustees, conditions attached to the grant make it improbable that they will be received.

Restricted Funds

Restricted Funds are to be used for a specific purpose as laid down by the donor. Expenditure which meets these criteria is identified against the fund.

Unrestricted Funds

Unrestricted Funds are incoming resources received or receivable generated for charitable purposes and available for use at the discretion of the trustees in furtherance of the general objectives of the charity and have not been designated for other purposes.

Paid Employees

The charity employs a Project Co-ordinator, part-time Facilities (Support) Officer and part-time Benefits Advisor and a Syrian Family Support Worker. These four posts are funded through restricted grants.

Trustee Expenses

There were no payments or reimbursements made to any trustees during the financial year.

Fixed Assets

Assets with a useful life of more than two years are capitalised at cost and depreciated over their useful life.

Depreciation on computer equipment is charged at 33% on a straight line basis.

Fixed Assets funded by capital grants are capitalised and a restricted capital reserve created. The reserve is reduced by the depreciation charge.

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2023 (CONT'D...)

2. Property & Operating Leases

i) Operating Lease Commitments - Nil.

ii) The annual commitment for the land and buildings lease amounts to £10,059 (£9,375 in 2021-22) where the term remaining is between one and five years. There are no further lease commitments.

Due to the pandemic, the authority reduced the rent charge, rent charges have increased for the current year.

3. Income from Grants, Donations and Legacies:

	Unrestricted Funds	Restricted Funds	Total 2023	Total 2022
	£	£	£	£
Donations from other charities, companies	8,000	90,182	98,182	52,264
Donations from trusts, individuals and similar	3,305	37,339	40,644	65,170
	11,305	127,521	138,826	117,434

4. Resources Expended

	Unrestricted Funds	Restricted Funds	Total 2023	Total 2022
	£	£	£	£
Staff payroll costs	(51)	115,225	115,174	134,997
Volunteer expenses & training	394	0	394	353
Staff travel & training	0	840	840	2,777
Social worker	2,549	0	2,549	800
Rent, rates & insurance (note 2)	6,135	7,000	13,135	11,516
IT, telephone & internet	4,824	0	4,824	4,772
Utilities, cleaning & maintenance.	4,204	0	4,204	2,221
Stationery, printing & postage	1,943	0	1,943	903
Publications & subscriptions	309	0	309	243
Web & promotional costs	179	0	179	95
Client outings & welfare costs	2,587	0	2,587	169
Depreciation	183	1,152	1,335	1,310
Governance Costs	0	572	572	534
Other expenses	9,238	7,997	17,235	10,013
Total	32,494	132,786	165,280	170,703

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2023 (CONT'D...)

	Computer Equipment £
5. Fixed Assets	
Cost	
At 1 April 2022	14,871
Additions	0
At 31 March 2023	<u>14,871</u>
Depreciation	
At 1 April 2022	12,605
Charge for year	1,336
At 31 March 2023	<u>13,941</u>
Net Book Value	
At 31 March 2022	2,266
At 31 March 2023	<u><u>930</u></u>

	2023 £	2022 £
6. Debtors and prepayments due within one year		
Debtors	0	0
Prepayments and accrued income	21,910	9,827
	<u>21,910</u>	<u>9,827</u>

	2023 £	2022 £
7. Creditors and accruals due within one year		
Creditors	30	30
Deferred income	0	0
Accruals	10,898	8,623
	<u>10,928</u>	<u>8,653</u>

	2023 £	2022 £
8. Staff Costs		
Gross wages	107,042	126,180
Employers National Insurance costs	6,745	7,921
Employers National Insurance rebate	(5,000)	(4,000)
Pension costs	6,387	4,896
	<u>115,174</u>	<u>134,997</u>

No employee earned more than £60,000.

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2023 (CONT'D...)

9. Restricted Income Funds as at March 31 2023

Fund Name	Purpose and restriction
Big Lottery (i)	The project is partly funding the following posts- the Co-ordinator, the Office Manager, Benefits Adviser and the Complicated Caseworker.
Harpur Trust (ii)	A further two year grant was awarded by Harpur Trust to support the part of the salary costs of the part- time posts of the Finance Manager & Finance Assistant, as well as the Integration Officer salary costs.
Harpur Trust (iii)	This funding concluded in September 2022.
WW4R1 Employment Support restricted Grants (iv)	These restricted funds are funding the Employment Support work.
Bedford Borough Council (v) - Syrian Refugees	The work for this project funded by the Borough concluded May 2022.

10. Movement of Major Funds

Fund Names	Balance at 1st April 2022 £	Incoming resources £	Outgoing resources £	Transfers £	Balance at 31st March 2023 £
Other	65,111	14,387	(32,494)	0	47,004
Unrestricted Funds	65,111	14,387	(32,494)	0	47,004
WW4R1 Employment Support(iv)	20,584	33,657	(30,299)	0	23,942
Bedford Borough Council Syrian Refugee (v)	19,645	2,282	(21,927)	0	0
Bedford & Luton Community Fund	5,000	5,000	(5,000)	(5,000)	0
Beds Charitable Trust	5,000	0	0	0	5,000
Big Lottery (i)	51	50,000	(50,051)	0	0
Harpur Trust (ii)	194	25,182	(19,459)	9	5,926
Harpur Trust (iii)	9	0	0	(9)	0
Panacea Society	0	10,000	(4,897)	5,000	10,103
Small restricted grants	0	1,750	0	0	1,750
	50,483	127,871	(131,633)	0	46,721
Restricted capital reserve (Note 11)	2,007	0	(1,153)	0	854
Restricted Funds	52,490	127,871	(132,786)	0	47,575
Total Funds	117,601	142,258	(165,280)	0	94,579



Annual Report

2023

(April 2022 – March 2023)

'A world where refugees and asylum seekers
are included, accepted and supported by
society'

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Reference and Administrative Details

Charity name	Bedfordshire Refugee and Asylum Seeker Support (BRASS)
Registered Charity Number	1096874
OISC Number	N200100432
Office address	27b Tavistock Street Bedford, MK40 2RB

Staff

Brian Cunningham - Coordinator
Andrea Tulloch - Benefits Adviser, Integration Officer (from December 2022)
Helena Maddock - Immigration & Employment Adviser
Jon Howton - Finance Officer
Pat Porter - Admin Assistant
Rani Sheemar - Finance Manager
Sharifullah Dorani - Immigration & Employment Adviser

Volunteers

Andrea Jones	Kathy Mortimer
Anne Shortley	Lindsey Coldwell
Brenda Betts	Liz Turner
Cathy Wood	Mahmoud El Sayed
Clare Ball	Michael Barber
David Porter	Nicola Lindsay
David Thomas	Patricia Porter
Gordon James	Sabina Billing
Helena Maddock	Sally Hilliard
Jane Marriott	Sharifullah Dorani
John Esam	Sidney Miller
Joanna Clark	Sue Horn
John Watkins	

Trustees

Morris Johns (Chair)	Cathy Moorhouse
Victoria Hilliard (Vice Chair)	James Biggs
Sanja Radic (Secretary)	Jo Tester
Cassandra Howes	

Structure, Governance and Management

Governing Document

BRASS is a registered charity governed by a constitution that was adopted on 1st October 1999 and then revised on 18th September 2002 and 5th March 2003. BRASS is a non-political, voluntary organisation, established for the benefit of refugees and asylum seekers in the County of Bedfordshire to assist in the relief of poverty, hardship or distress.

Organisational Structure

BRASS employs 1 full-time member of staff; a Project Co-ordinator overseeing day to day business. and a Resettlement worker supporting Syrian and Afghan Refugees who have been resettled in Bedford as part of the government's resettlement programme. We also employ a number of part time staff; a Benefits Adviser, 2 Immigration Advisers, 2 Employment Advisers, an Integration Officer (from December 2022), a Finance Manager, a Finance Officer and an office Manager. Staff are supported by a team of dedicated volunteers, making our services excellent value for money. Services are delivered from a town centre, local government owned property leased by BRASS. A board of skilled and experienced trustees drawn from the local community oversee and govern services.

Recruitment and Appointment of Trustees

BRASS recognises that the recruitment and selection of new trustees can strongly influence our future effectiveness. The organisation aims to follow good practice in this field as well as the provisions of our constitution. All BRASS trustees are elected at the Annual General Meeting or are co-opted. When looking to recruit new trustees, the committee will attempt to fill any gaps in skills, knowledge and experience of our current trustees and reflect the diversity of the communities in which we operate. We will use the most appropriate ways of recruiting new trustees, including local networks and advertising. We will prepare role descriptions for trustees, ensure that all potential trustees meet all eligibility criteria and ask all potential trustees about any possible conflicts of interest.

All trustee nominations are presented at the Annual General Meeting or the next Executive Committee. They will then be invited to meet with the chairperson to discuss their nomination and this discussion will be recorded on their nomination paper and then, once accepted, their name and details will be given to the Charities Commission.

Relationships with Other Organisations

BRASS believes that by building capacity through partnership working we can facilitate sustainability of service provision. The work of BRASS complements other services through the co-ordinator's involvement with The Equalities and New Migration Partnership and the Bedfordshire Advice Forum – local multi-

agency forums where issues are raised, information exchanged and partnership solutions explored. BRASS is a key participant in the organisation of the annual Bedford Refugee Week which holds events to raise awareness of the issues facing refugees and asylum seekers.

BRASS has strong working relationships with local organisations so that individuals can get support from the organisation best placed to provide it. Luton Law Centre has qualified solicitors and case workers who take referrals from BRASS and provide telephone support to BRASS advisers. There is cross referral of clients between BRASS and the Citizens Advice Bureau and the Polish British Integration Centre. BRASS makes referrals to the local MP Mohammad Yasin who helps with representations to the Home Office for specific cases. Referrals are received from the Social Care Team, which is responsible for unaccompanied under-18 asylum seekers, for both advice at the drop-in and English tuition. Community Voluntary Service (CVS) provides a regular supply of enthusiastic and committed volunteers and Bedford Borough Council supports BRASS and contributes to Refugee Week.

BRASS works in partnership with both local and national charities. Advice and support are provided by the Refugee Council, which is the largest refugee agency in the UK. BRASS is a referral organisation for clients requiring provisions via the Bedford Foodbank.

Supporting the local voluntary sector and working towards some financial self-sustainability has become an important part of the organisational ethic.

Risk Management

The main risk again this year has been Covid and the earlier part of the year meant continuing with telephone advice with face to face meetings only when necessary and with Covid measures in place including plastic screens, face masks, sanitisers, social distancing and good ventilation and we had to much reduce our social activities. Towards the beginning of the year, a cautious reopening of services commenced. We were fully functioning again for most of the year and continue with safety measures such as good air circulation in place

We ensure that our health and safety policy, fire risk assessment and fire safety management plan are regularly reviewed and updated. The building and our services are appropriately insured to safeguard the organisation and volunteers with the tutoring project are subject to DBS checks in order to protect our clients. Our drop-in advice service is regulated by the Office of the Immigration Services Commission (OISC) and we are regularly audited.

As with other small charities, BRASS is affected by external factors, particularly in terms of the economy and legal changes affecting asylum seekers and refugees. The economic situation nationally continues to affect fundraising and BRASS has done well to secure a 5 year lottery grant. BRASS continues to seek and secure other grants which allow us to maintain and expand our services. BRASS has had members of staff successfully qualify for OISC level 1. They are supervised by a member of staff qualified to level 2. In addition, it is important for BRASS that we are able to provide volunteers with training and progression

in return for their commitment. BRASS is also affected by media coverage of refugees and asylum seekers. This can result in increased interest in helping our clients, but it can also have a negative impact when prejudice against refugees and asylum seekers increases.

Internally, BRASS has a group of committed trustees with skills and experience that can help with the development of the organisation. The National Lottery Community Fund grant provides longer term stability for our staff and the ability to expand the number of staff we employ and therefore the capacity to expand our services. Our success in fundraising also presents some challenges as many trusts will only fund an organisation for a limited time, which means we have to be increasingly proactive in seeking funders. We are fortunate to have a good number of committed volunteers, enabling us to provide reliable and high-quality services beyond our drop-in advice service.

The organisation has a policy to hold financial reserves of six months, a level which we have now achieved and exceeded.



Message from the Chair of Trustees

Dear Trustees, Supporters, and Friends of BRASS,

I am pleased to present the Annual Report for 2022/23 on behalf of BRASS. As the Chair of Trustees, I am humbled and honoured to provide an overview of our organisation's activities, achievements, and contributions over the past year.

BRASS remains committed to its mission of providing support, hope, and opportunities for refugees and asylum seekers who have sought refuge in Bedford. The year presented numerous challenges, but our dedicated team and generous supporters have continued to make a significant impact in the lives of those in need.



Key Highlights and Achievements:

1. **Advocacy and Awareness:** BRASS remains actively involved in advocacy efforts to raise awareness about the refugees' issues, and advocate for better policies and support systems for refugees. Our campaigns reached a broader audience, resulting in increased public understanding and support, particularly in the Sharnbrook area, where there was concern about possible local hostility to the presence of a new asylum hotel in the village.
2. **English Language Lessons:** Our education programs have continued to thrive, ensuring access to quality lessons for the refugees and asylum seekers.
3. **Social Programme:** We organised a variety of events which encouraged the refugees and local Bedfordians to meet each other; for example, in a friendly football competition, which allowed refugees and local teams to compete with each other. Other social events, like a coach trip to Wicksteed Park, provided the families with rare opportunities to unwind in relaxed surroundings.
4. **Advisory Sessions.** The drop-in days have been expanded to provide more opportunities for the refugees to come and seek advice on various issues.

Our success would not have been possible without the dedication of our staff, volunteers, and the unwavering support of our donors, partners, and trustees. We extend our heartfelt gratitude to each of you for your contributions to our cause.

Challenges and Future Plans: While we have achieved significant milestones, challenges remain. The ongoing refugee crisis, compounded by a sometimes hostile media, requires us to remain vigilant and responsive. In the coming year, we aim to:

- Strengthen partnerships with other organizations to enhance our impact.
- Continue advocating for refugee rights and improved policies.
- Ensure the efficient and transparent use of resources to maximize our effectiveness.

In conclusion, I want to emphasize that the work we do at BRASS is not possible without your support. Together, we have made a profound difference in the lives of refugees, providing them with hope and opportunities for a better future. As we look ahead, let us remain steadfast in our commitment to this noble cause.



Thank you for your unwavering support and dedication to BRASS. We invite you to join us in the journey ahead as we strive to make a positive impact on the lives of refugees in Bedford.

Sincerely,
Morris Johns

Morris Johns, Chair of Trustees

Co-ordinator's Report

The most significant change in service for us this year was the re-starting of drop-in advice in person having done mostly by phone during Covid. We expanded drop-in hours from Tuesday and Wednesday to opening Thursday also. But I will let Sharif tell you more about that.



We also started having social work placement students again. Melissa and Veronica helped triage at drop-in, which is great for them to have experience with clients, helping them with simpler matters also. They also helped with social activities including updating our myth buster leaflets to give out at our market stall during refugee week and helped organise our 5-a-side football tournament which went ahead for the first time post Covid. Thanks to the BPHA, Bedfordshire Police, PBIC, social workers and to refugee teams who attended and referees and other helpers who came despite the rain!



We had a new Integration officer start in late 2022. Andrea is also our Benefits advisor. She is now looking after our tutors and helping with social activities. So our tutors are much more organised but I will let her tell you about that and lots more social activities in the future. We had a coach trip to Wicksteed park this summer. Not our usual Hunstanton seaside trip we considered the long journey was still a Covid risk so we went somewhere closer. We also had a very successful Christmas party this year with over 100 attending

Our usual client groups were added to this year by Ukrainians, around 40 to 50 mostly with our Employment project which has been a great success. We have heard that project, which was supposed to end in December is continuing with some further funding. I will let Helena tell you more about that.

Later in the year we heard rumours of a new Asylum hotel in nearby Sharnbrook. We visited the site and look forward to working with the predicted 30 asylum seeking families there and local residents some of whom are BRASS volunteers and have expressed an interest in helping.

Finally, the refugee family reunion project run by the legal department at the university of Bedford continues to run under the BRASS umbrella. There can be few better things than reuniting refugees with the families they had to leave behind.



Brian Cunningham, BRASS Co-ordinator

Service Updates

Drop-in Report

For all of the reporting year, our drop-in sessions were open on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays. We also continued to solve clients' matters through telephone appointments if they were unable to attend. We managed to help our clients with a variety of matters, including those relating to immigration, benefits, employment, (social) housing, utility bills, debts, professional driving theory licence, taxi/private hire driver applications, Uber Eats/Just Eat driver applications, school/nursery, to name but a few. As we continue to see more and more clients, we will continue to open three days a week.

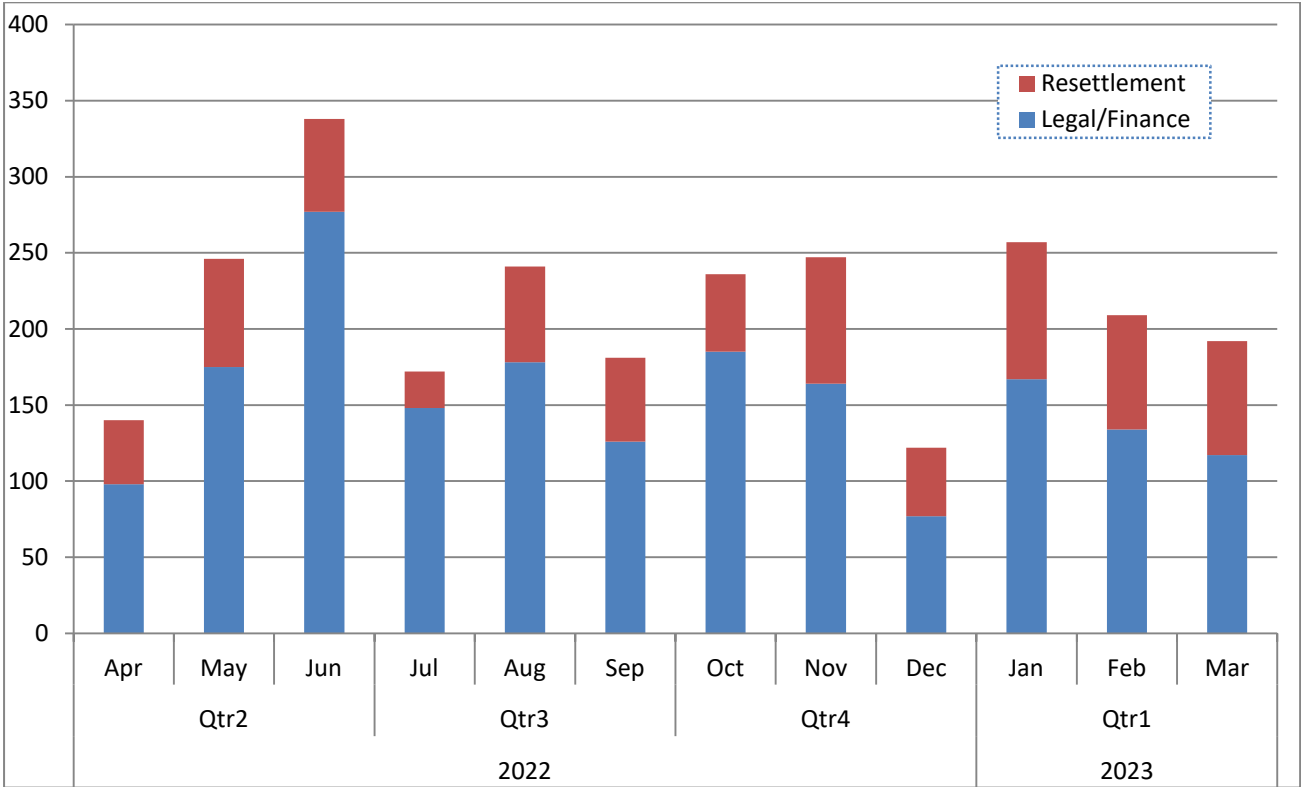
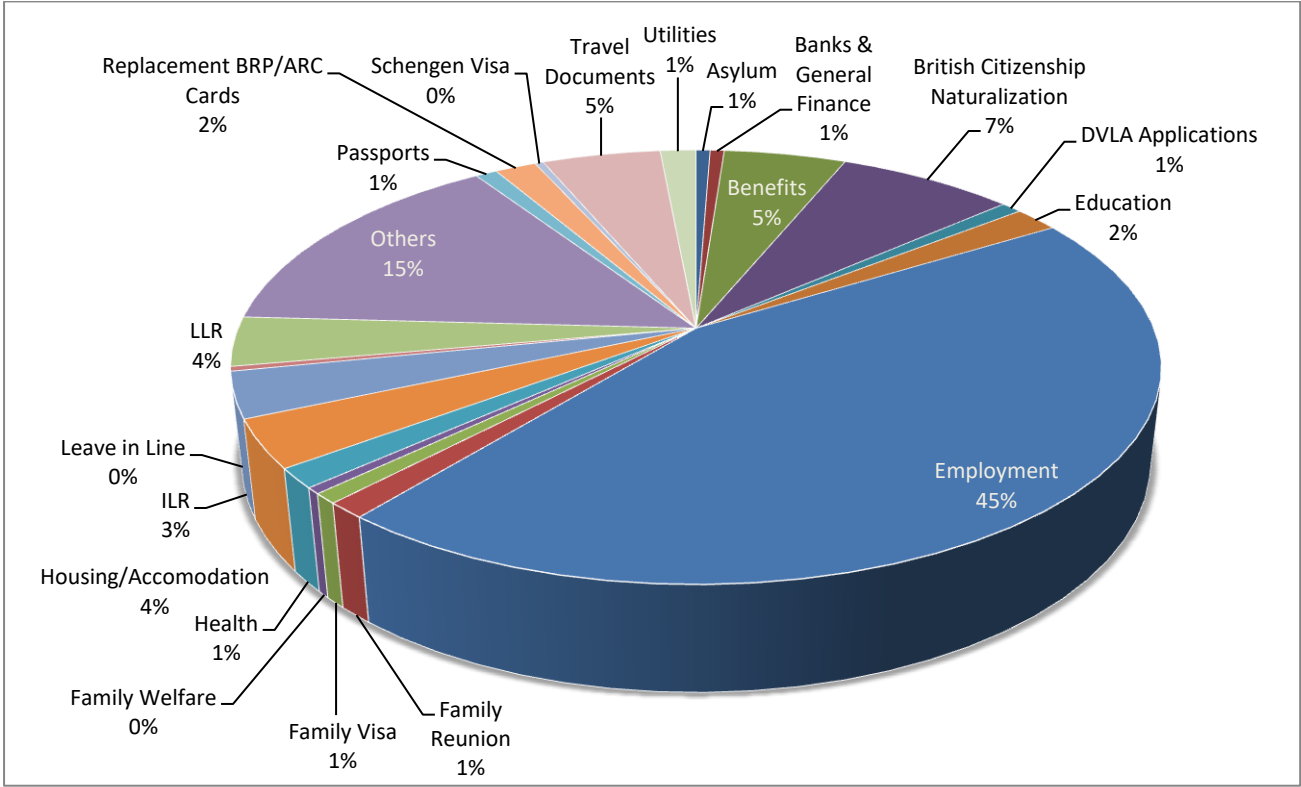
As my colleague, Helena Maddock, elaborates on this, we registered more than 80 clients for our Employment Project and sent them to a variety of courses.

We have two immigration Advisors, Helena Maddock and myself. We were very busy this year and managed to help hundreds of clients with their immigration matters, including applying for Schengen visas. Schengen visas were much more in demand this reporting year because Brexit introduced more restrictions where our clients with limited leave had to apply for a Schengen visa to travel to Europe. Furthermore, we provide a comprehensive approach when it comes to immigration matters: we help our clients fill in the application form, book a UKVCAS appointment, and sort out their supporting documents.

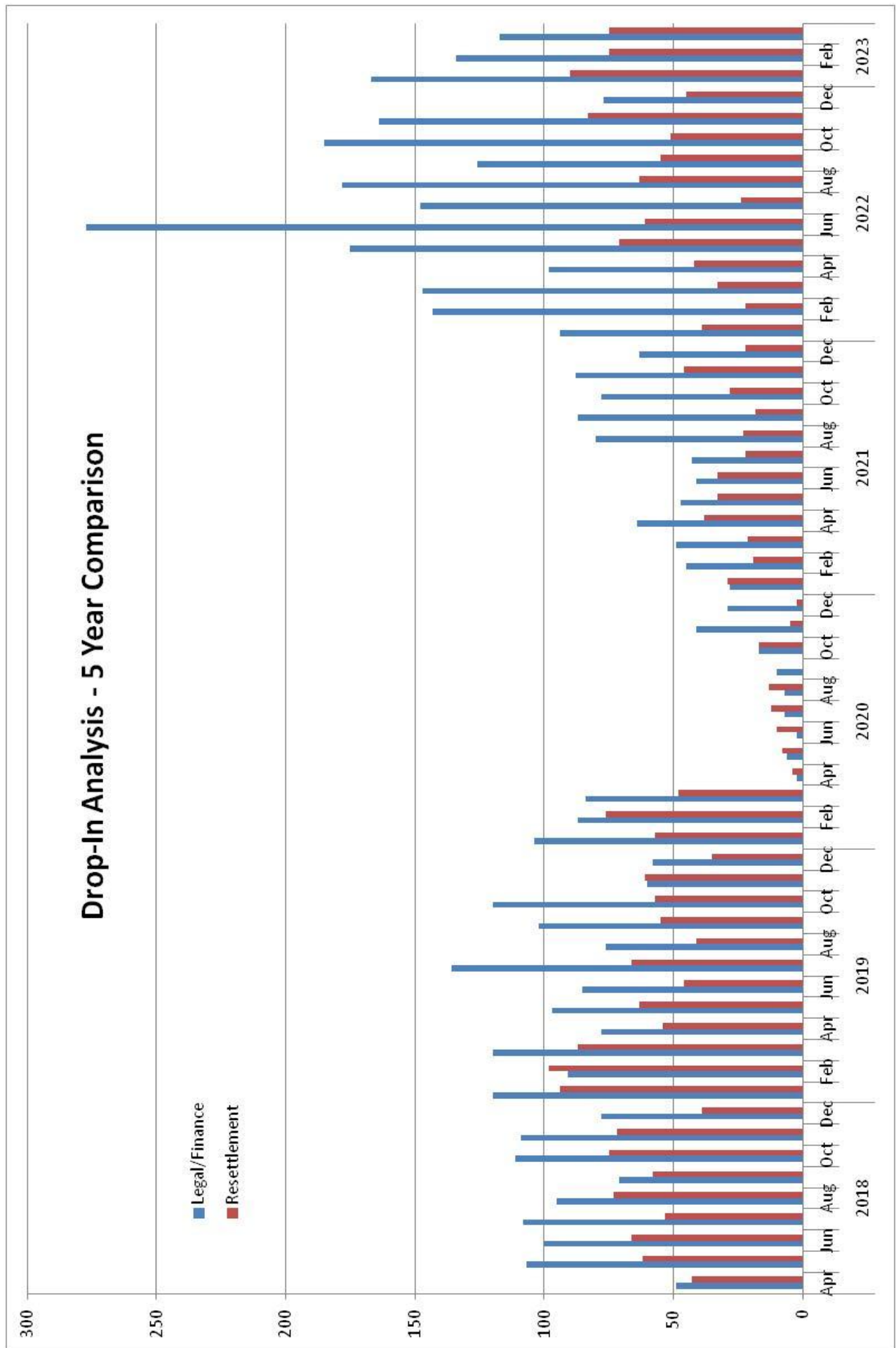
All in all, we supported hundreds of clients this reporting year. We would have not been able to do so without the support of our volunteers and social work placement students. They played a crucial part, and BRASS is grateful to them.

Sharifullah Dorani, Immigration and Employment Adviser

Drop-in Enquiries 2022-2023



Drop-in Enquiries 5 Year Comparison 2018-2023



Employment Project

In the year starting in April 2022 we registered 83 new clients for the employment project, bringing our total in March 2023 to 172 employment clients. The original end date for the project was December 2022 but we have been able to continue, with different course providers, up until September 2023. Sharif and myself work together on the employment project. We are delighted that we exceeded our targets and consequently our partners were pleased to extend the period of the project. This will continue in a different format for at least another 6 months.

We have been able to refer a lot of our clients to a variety of courses (more than 100 referrals), including driving theory and IELTS, as well as low level English courses on topics such as how to use the NHS. We have also referred clients to MENTA, a business mentoring organisation and they have helped clients who are interested in becoming self-employed or starting their own business. We had more than 30 clients' overseas qualifications recognised here by ENIC. We continue to help our clients with CV writing, finding suitable courses for them, helping with job applications and other research for them.

We have had very good feedback from our clients about the services we have been able to provide such as "I would like to express my deep gratitude to BRASS...you very kindly provided me with the things which I really needed."

Helena Maddock, Immigration and Employment Adviser

Tuition

Since starting in the role as Integration Officer, one of the biggest tasks was to get all of the volunteer tutors together to get some feedback on how they felt lessons were going. Based on the level of English that some of the students were arriving with, it was necessary to review and update learning resources. Joanna Clark, a BRASS volunteer, helped organise the resources and we were able to purchase additional resources from some fund raising organised by Kathy Mortimer, another BRASS volunteer.

The majority of students come to us from local authority care/ hostels that look after Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC). They are children and young people who have been separated from their parents or carers and are seeking asylum in the UK.

Our Afghan women's group has grown from one day a week to two days a week.

We have also had students from some countries that we have never worked with before including Ukraine. So, we have increased the number of volunteer tutors to accommodate the new students.

They are still progressing and generally use our English classes to support any learning they may receive at college or before being given a place at college, it has been very interesting scheduling all the tutors and students to rooms.

Andrea Tullock, Integration Officer

Allotment

BRASS continues to support a Syrian family at an allotment plot in Queens Park, Bedford.



Objectives and Activities

Vision

A world where refugees and asylum seekers are included, accepted and supported by society.

Mission Statement

BRASS is an established charity working to empower, inform and support refugees and asylum seekers and to protect rights with an aim to develop independence and involvement in UK society.

Strategic Objectives 2020-2023

The trustees have reviewed BRASS' strategic objectives and made some changes. These objectives will form the basis of planning our activities over the next three years. We plan to use these to inform annual targets to ensure we remain focussed on our strategic objectives.

- 1) Sustainable development of BRASS as an organisation to serve the interests and needs of refugees and asylum seekers and their families.
- 2) To enhance the ability of refugees and asylum seekers to understand and navigate UK procedures, processes and systems and promoting change to create a fairer system.
- 3) Provide opportunities for refugees and asylum seekers to increase independence, integration and confidence through learning and social activities.
- 4) Encourage participation of refugees and asylum seekers in the development and management of BRASS.
- 5) To build partnerships with other agencies, to cross refer clients, share information and campaign for the welfare of refugees and asylum seekers locally and nationally.
- 6) To inform and educate the community of Bedford and foster relationships between refugees and asylum seekers and the wider community.

Services

BRASS currently offers three drop-in advice sessions staffed by volunteers and BRASS staff - on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays, 10am-2pm, with fewer sessions conducted via telephone than in the earlier months of the year. These are accredited by the Office of the Immigration Services Commissioner (OISC) to give immigration advice. Through funding by the National Lottery Community Fund and the East of England LGA, BRASS employs a specialist benefits adviser, 2 employment advisers and 2 immigration advisers. We also support the

Refugee Legal Assistance project run by the University of Bedford on its Luton Campus on Tuesday evenings during term time, which specialises in refugee family reunions. The project has, over recent years, supported over 55 families.

Our tutoring programme matches volunteer tutors with refugees and asylum seekers who want to learn or improve their English language skills. This service is offered in the community, at the BRASS offices and online. BRASS provides small group tuition in numeracy and preparing for the Life in the UK test

Our allotment plot continues to be worked by client volunteers. Whilst our popular annual summer trip to the seaside was, sadly, not possible this year, our coach trip to Wicksteed Park for clients was oversubscribed.

BRASS plays a leading role in Refugee Week each year, organising a variety of events to promote refugee issues, this year's events revolved around raising awareness via our market stall with The Higgins, myth-busting leaflets, suggested reading Book Lists and installations at St Paul's Church.

Public Benefit

BRASS provides a range of services to support refugees and asylum seekers in the Bedford community and further afield. Free immigration advice is in short supply in this area and without the service provided by BRASS through phone and appointment advice sessions, many refugees and asylum seekers would be left to tackle the often complex immigration system alone. Advice is also provided on a range of resettlement issues including employment, housing, education and benefits. This advice enables our clients to better integrate into society and to learn to manage their own affairs independently. BRASS also provides a dedicated resettlement worker to support Syrian and Afghan refugees who are resettled in Bedford, supporting them to settle and integrate into our community.

For those who want to improve their English, BRASS' tutoring project matches volunteer tutors with clients. This relationship can often provide improved self-confidence and support with other aspects of integration. We also run classes for those wishing to improve their numeracy and those preparing for the Life in the UK test. The BRASS allotment is now quite well established, providing a sense of community to clients, as well as providing asylum seekers (who are not allowed to work) activities to fill their time as well as fresh produce to take home.

BRASS is working to inform and educate the public on issues around immigration and asylum. Asylum seekers are a stigmatised group and through our work with Refugee Week and our coordinator giving talks to groups in the Bedford area, we are encouraging the public to look differently at refugees and asylum seekers and to see the positive contribution they make to our society.

Achievements and Performance

Progress towards Strategic Objectives 2020-2023

We have measured our progress on our previous strategic objectives as the review took place at the end of the reporting year.

Sustainable development of BRASS as an organisation to serve the interests and needs of refugees and asylum seekers.

BRASS' advice sessions, our core service, is provided mainly in person with face to face meetings with clients with appropriate Covid measures in place. We also continue to provide specialist benefits advice. Through our VPRS resettlement worker, we support families, in conjunction with Bedford Borough Council, who are resettled in Bedford from refugee camps in the Middle East. Our English Language project has been boosted by the appointment of an Integration officer to run the tuition service.

The BRASS allotment continues to offer a great benefit to clients.

To enhance the ability of refugees and asylum seekers to understand UK procedures, processes and systems.

The UK immigration system can be confusing even for those of us who deal with it on a regular basis, so navigating it can be near impossible for those who are new to the country and may have limited English. Through our OISC registered drop-in immigration advice sessions, BRASS helps refugees and asylum seekers to deal with these complex systems. Advice is also provided around other non-immigration issues such as housing, employment and finance to aid integration. We are able to provide specialist advice through our immigration advisers, employment advisers and benefits adviser. Our popular English Language Tuition also gives refugees and asylum seekers the skills to better navigate British systems and our classes in numeracy and preparing for the Life in the UK test also aid integration.

Increasing independence and confidence through learning and social activities.

Our tuition project provides one-to-one/group tuition to those who wish to improve their English, numeracy and preparing for the Life in the UK test. It is hoped that this will enable them to become more independent and better able to integrate into society. Our allotment provides a place for our clients to relax, meet new people and grow their own food.

To raise awareness in wider society of issues faced by refugees and asylum seekers.

BRASS is always heavily involved with activities in Bedford celebrating Refugee Week. Myth busting leaflets are given out to members of the public and events are held at various venues around the town including a very popular football tournament and fun day in one of Bedford's public parks. We also had a publicity raising market stall where we distributed Myth busting leaflets. BRASS' coordinator gives talks to local groups and the feedback forms completed at the end of these talks indicate that perceptions of refugees and asylum seekers have been changed by what they have heard. We regularly publish positive stories about our clients and information about refugees and the asylum system on our website and Facebook page.

Encourage participation of refugees and asylum seekers in the development and management of BRASS.

BRASS continually encourages clients and former clients to become involved in BRASS, whether through attending groups and activities, becoming a volunteer or joining the committee. A former client is now on our committee and some of our volunteers have previously used our services. We have also provided social work placements to a number of students, some of whom are from a refugee background.

To build partnerships with other agencies, to cross refer clients, share information and campaign on behalf of the wellbeing of refugees and asylum seekers locally and nationally.

BRASS works with other agencies in a variety of ways. BRASS works with many local charities and networks. Our coordinator is involved with The New Migration Partnership, Bedford Borough Diversity Network and the Bedford Advice forum – local multi-agency forums where issues are raised, information exchanged and partnership solutions explored. BRASS is a key participant in the organisation of the annual Bedford Refugee Week which holds events to raise awareness of the issues facing refugees and asylum seekers.

Referrals are received from Children's Services which is responsible for unaccompanied Asylum seekers under the age of 18. The Community Voluntary Service (CVS) provides a regular supply of enthusiastic and committed volunteers and the Charity continues to receive invaluable support from the Bedford Borough.

BRASS has been very involved with Refugee Week in Bedford for many years. The aim of Refugee Week is to raise awareness of the issues faced by refugees and asylum seekers and the positive contributions they make to British society. Covid has had a serious effect upon the level of engagement in the past but we are back working with the local community in terms of giving talks to various groups in the Bedford area to change perceptions of these issues and gathering feedback from those who attend to assess changing attitudes.

Fundraising activities

We would like to thank the following organisations from whom we have received grants over the past years

The National Lottery Community Fund
Bedford Borough Council
The Beds and Luton Community Foundation
Beatrice Laing Trust
WW4R1

Harpur Trust
Wixamtree Trust
Panacea Charitable Trust
East of England LGA

We would also like to thank all of the individual donors who support BRASS through one off and regular donations.

BRASS would like to thank our fundraiser Karen Mayoh for her continued hard work and support.

Future Plans and the challenges ahead

Our services have been steadily resuming this year as we came out of Covid. We are now helping clients in numbers higher than pre Covid.

We have obtained a new five year grant with the National Lottery to help with our long term stability and continue to work other local funders.

BRASS will continue to prioritise the needs of our clients by providing good quality, reliable services. In order to safeguard BRASS and ensure that our vital services continue to be available, we will work to ensure good governance to maintain stability. BRASS is fortunate to be in a secure financial position, with more than 6 months of reserves. There are bound to be other challenges ahead, but we are confident that BRASS is well placed to face them.

Getting Involved with BRASS

Volunteers are often needed for our drop-in, English tutoring and the allotment.

If you are interested in becoming involved with BRASS as a volunteer, please contact Co-ordinator Brian Cunningham on 01234 211381 or brian@brass27b.org. For further information on any of our work, please check our website www.brassbedford.org.uk and Facebook pages www.facebook.com/brassbedford and www.facebook.com/brassallotment



Charity Registration Number: 1096874

**BEDFORDSHIRE REFUGEE AND ASYLUM SEEKER SUPPORT GROUP
(BRASS)**

TRUSTEES REPORT AND ACCOUNTS
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2023

CONTENTS OF THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2023

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Balance Sheet	Page 8
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LEGAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION

CHARITY NAME: Bedfordshire Refugee and Asylum Seeker Support Group

OTHER NAME CHARITY IS KNOWN BY: BRASS

REGISTERED CHARITY NUMBER: 1096874

CHARITY'S PRINCIPAL ADDRESS:

27B Tavistock Street
Bedford
MK40 2RB

NAMES OF THE CHARITY TRUSTEES WHO MANAGE THE CHARITY

Victoria Hilliard
Cathy Moorhouse
Morris Johns - Chair from 3rd July 2020
Sanja Radic
James Biggs
Jo Tester
Cass Howes

PROJECT CO-ORDINATOR

Brian Cunningham

BANKERS

RBS\\
Bedford Branch
15-19 Mill Street
Bedford
MK40 3EU

Main current account held since May 2021 :-

The Co-operative Bank
Delf House
Skelmersdale
WN8 6WT

REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES

REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2023

The trustees of the charity present their report together with the financial statements for the year ended 31 March 2023, prepared in accordance with the Charities Act 2011 and the Accounting and Reporting by Charities Statement of Recommended Practice (SORP 2005).

From April 2022 to March 2023 finance meetings and trustee meetings were held quarterly, attended by the Chair, Executive Committee members and staff.

BRASS employs a Project Co-ordinator to oversee day to day business and to provide specialist advice, and full-time Syrian Family Support Officer and part-time Benefits Adviser, Integration Officer, Immigration Adviser, Finance Manager and Finance Officer. Much of the charity's work is undertaken by a team of dedicated volunteers.

OBJECTIVES AND REVIEW OF ACTIVITIES

The charity is an established non-political, voluntary organisation working to empower, inform and support refugees and asylum seekers and their families, protect their rights and enable them to develop their independence and involvement in UK society. Specifically the charity was established for the benefit of refugees and asylum seekers in the County of Bedfordshire to assist in the relief of poverty, hardship or distress. Services are delivered from a local government owned property in Bedford town centre which is leased by BRASS. Much work in the previous year was done by phone and virtually from our offices and by staff from home due to Covid. From early in this year we were back in the office seeing people under Covid conditions by appointment, by the end of this year we had returned to full drop in advice as well.

BRASS continues to have strong working relationships with local organisations providing advice so that individuals can get support from the organisations best placed to offer it. Luton Law Centre and Luton law firms have qualified solicitors and case workers who take referrals from BRASS and provide telephone support to BRASS advisors. BRASS also works with the University of Bedfordshire Law Department to assist refugees with family reunification applications. BRASS works with the Citizens Advice Bureau to cross refer clients and makes referrals to the local MP who, in specific cases, helps with representations to the Home Office.

Referrals are received from Children's Services which is responsible for unaccompanied asylum seekers under the age of 18. The Community Voluntary Service (CVS) provides a regular supply of enthusiastic and committed volunteers and the charity continues to receive invaluable support from the Bedford Borough Council who run the New Migration Partnership of which the BRASS co-ordinator is chair. The co-ordinator is also on the steering group of the Bedford Advice Forum. Bedfordshire Rural Communities Charity who previously supported our tutoring project by carrying out the relevant DBS checks, but we are now able to do these for ourselves.

BRASS works in partnership with both local and national charities. Advice and support are provided by the Refugee Council, which is the largest refugee agency in the UK, the Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants (who also offer immigration advice training courses) and Migrant Help. BRASS is also a registered referrer for Bedford Food Bank.

BRASS seeks to support the local voluntary sector and work towards financial self-sustainability. It leases its offices in Bedford town centre.

BRASS is focused on working in partnership with other organisations to share knowledge and skills, prevent duplication, maximise effectiveness, cut costs and share facilities. On behalf of the trustees of BRASS I can confirm that in carrying out our financial review we have considered and complied with our duty to have due regard to the Charity Commission's guidance on public benefit.

REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES (CONT'D...)

ACHIEVEMENTS AND PERFORMANCE

During the last financial year BRASS has supported over 400 clients. We seek to support our client group's changing needs; the changes to the Benefits system and ever increasing complexity of immigration applications has increased demands for our services. BRASS now receives funding from the Big Lottery and will provide specialist advice through a Complex Caseworker for immigration matters and a Benefits Advisor. We will be able to provide additional social activities through our Integration Officer who started this year funded by the Harpur Trust.

We increased our advice sessions from twice a week to three times a week. However, we also offer appointments with our Benefits Adviser worker and our Immigration Adviser where we feel the need is urgent or can best be addressed in person.

Our social activities have become more active again this year. Our Co-ordinator is still the chair of the Refugee Week steering group, and we had successfully organised a football tournament with refugees and other local teams. We also did a market stall giving out myth busting leaflets. BRASS' allotment is still up and running with both refugees and volunteers attending.

FINANCIAL REVIEW

As in previous years, BRASS is very fortunate to have received funding from various different sources this year.

The Big Lottery continues to fund our Co-ordinator, along with other posts and other running costs for five years.

The Harpur Trust continues its support by helping to fund our Finance Manager and Finance Officer salary costs and most recently an Integration officer. Bedford Borough Council provided continued funding support towards staff costs at the beginning of the year. Money has been used to fund a part-time Benefits Adviser.

We thank Beds and Luton Community Foundation, Panacea Society, Wixamtree Trust and WW4R1 for their continued ongoing support for funding

Total Incoming Resources during the financial year were £142,258, a significant increase on the previous year. This income has been used to provide funding to cover all our existing posts which are all filled and other direct costs and overheads. A large part of the reason for the increase in income is that the new lottery funding came into effect from April 2022. We are delighted to say that the lottery granted us this new funding which started at the beginning of the new financial year and that this funding is for five years which means we will be free from having to put together a new lottery bid for five years. Now that we have successfully secured this funding we now have more time to concentrate on putting in other bids. We are asking for funding over more than one year as we have done in the past. We are awaiting outcome of some of these new bids and are planning others early in the new financial year.

Costs decreased this year by approximately 3% to £165,280 mainly due to the Syrian working coming to close. There has been an increase in some staff hours mainly to support the growing needs of the increasing number of refugees coming into the country.

REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES (CONT'D...)

FINANCIAL REVIEW RESERVES POLICY.

BRASS reserves as at 31st March 2023, were £94,579. Of these funds £47,575 were restricted funds, the remaining £47,004 were unrestricted funds. The Trustee Board have established a policy whereby it aims to maintain sufficient unrestricted funds not invested in tangible fixed assets and not required to meet future budgeted expenditure, being the "free reserves", to support the future growth of the charity and provide sufficient reserves for dealing with possible contingencies such as short-term cessation of project activity or redundancy.

Approved by the trustees and signed on their behalf by:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M. Johns'.

Morris Johns
Chair
Date: 15th September 2023

INDEPENDENT EXAMINER'S REPORT TO THE TRUSTEES OF BEDFORDSHIRE REFUGEE AND ASYLUM SEEKER SUPPORT GROUP

I report on the financial statements of the charity for the year ended 31 March 2023 as set out on pages 7 to 12.

This report is made solely to the charity's trustees, as a body, in accordance with section 145 of the Charities Act 2011 ('the 2011 Act'). My work has been undertaken so that I might state to the charity's trustees those matters I am required to state to them in this report and for no other purpose. To the fullest extent permitted by law, I do not accept or assume responsibility to anyone other than the charity and the charity's trustees as a body, for my work, for this report, or for the opinions I have formed.

Respective responsibilities of trustees and examiner

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

It is my responsibility to:

- * examine the financial statements under section 145 of the 2011 Act;
- * to follow the procedures laid down in the General Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the 2011 Act; and
- * 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 financial statements presented with those records. It also includes consideration of any unusual items or disclosures in the financial statements 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 financial statements present a 'true and fair view' and the report is limited to those matters set out in the statement below.

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 financial statements which accord with the accounting records and comply with the accounting 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 financial statements to be reached.



John Esam
Mayfield Lodge
1 Main Road,
Biddenham
MK40 4BB

Dated: 15th September 2023

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES AS OF 31ST MARCH 2023

Incoming Resources	Note	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	Total 2023 £	Total 2022 £
Grants receivable	3	8,000	90,182	98,182	65,170
Donations and other fund raising activities		3,305	37,339	40,644	52,264
Rental income		0	0	0	0
Investment income		114	0	114	43
Other income		2,968	350	3,318	4,655
Total Incoming Resources		14,387	127,871	142,258	122,132
Resources Expended					
Costs of generating funds		7,950	1500	9,450	10,200
Charitable activities	4	24,544	130,714	155,258	159,969
Governance costs		0	572	572	534
Total Resources Expended		32,494	132,786	165,280	170,703
Net Incoming/ (Outgoing) Resources		(18,107)	(4,915)	(23,022)	(48,571)
Funds brought forward		65,111	52,490	117,601	166,172
Transfers between funds		0	0	0	0
Funds carried forward		47,004	47,575	94,579	117,601

All of the charity's activities derive from continuing operations during the above two periods.

BALANCE SHEET AT 31 MARCH 2023

	Note	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	Total 2023 £	Total 2022 £
Fixed Assets					
Tangible assets	5	76	854	930	2,266
Current Assets					
Debtors and Prepayments	6	1,400	20,510	21,910	9,827
Cash and Bank in hand		45,528	37,139	82,667	114,161
Total Current Assets		46,928	57,649	105,507	123,988
Creditors Amounts falling due within one year	7	0	10,928	10,928	8,653
Net Current Assets		46,928	46,721	94,579	115,335
Net Assets		47,004	47,575	94,579	117,601
Funds of the Charity					
Unrestricted funds	10	46,091	0	46,091	63,617
Restricted funds	10	0	46,721	46,721	50,483
Unrestricted & Restricted capital reserve		76	854	930	2,266
Designated funds		837	0	837	1,235
Total funds		47,004	47,575	94,579	117,601

Trustees' Responsibilities

The trustees acknowledge their responsibility in complying with the requirements of the Charities Commission and confirm that the accounts have been prepared in accordance with Accounting and Reporting by Charities (SORP 2005) and Charities Act 2011.

Approved by the trustees and signed on their behalf by:


.....

Name Morris Johns, Dated 15th September 20223

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2023

1. Accounting Policies

Statement of compliance

The financial statements have been prepared on the basis of historic cost and in accordance with the applicable United Kingdom Reporting Standards, the Charities Act 2011 and the Accounting and Reporting by Charities Statement of Recommended Practice (SORP 2005).

Basis of Preparation

As permitted by SORP 2005 the trustees have adapted the heading used to describe Incoming Resources and Resources Expended within the Statement of Financial Activities when presenting the results for the year.

Incoming Resources

Incoming Resources are recognised when received or receivable by the charity. Income is derived from fund raising activities, donations and the sub-letting of rented property. Grants are recognised on receipt or award unless, in the judgement of the trustees, conditions attached to the grant make it improbable that they will be received.

Restricted Funds

Restricted Funds are to be used for a specific purpose as laid down by the donor. Expenditure which meets these criteria is identified against the fund.

Unrestricted Funds

Unrestricted Funds are incoming resources received or receivable generated for charitable purposes and available for use at the discretion of the trustees in furtherance of the general objectives of the charity and have not been designated for other purposes.

Paid Employees

The charity employs a Project Co-ordinator, part-time Facilities (Support) Officer and part-time Benefits Advisor and a Syrian Family Support Worker. These four posts are funded through restricted grants.

Trustee Expenses

There were no payments or reimbursements made to any trustees during the financial year.

Fixed Assets

Assets with a useful life of more than two years are capitalised at cost and depreciated over their useful life.

Depreciation on computer equipment is charged at 33% on a straight line basis.

Fixed Assets funded by capital grants are capitalised and a restricted capital reserve created. The reserve is reduced by the depreciation charge.

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2023 (CONT'D...)

2. Property & Operating Leases

i) Operating Lease Commitments - Nil.

ii) The annual commitment for the land and buildings lease amounts to £10,059 (£9,375 in 2021-22) where the term remaining is between one and five years. There are no further lease commitments.

Due to the pandemic, the authority reduced the rent charge, rent charges have increased for the current year.

3. Income from Grants, Donations and Legacies:

	Unrestricted Funds	Restricted Funds	Total 2023	Total 2022
	£	£	£	£
Donations from other charities, companies	8,000	90,182	98,182	52,264
Donations from trusts, individuals and similar	3,305	37,339	40,644	65,170
	11,305	127,521	138,826	117,434

4. Resources Expended

	Unrestricted Funds	Restricted Funds	Total 2023	Total 2022
	£	£	£	£
Staff payroll costs	(51)	115,225	115,174	134,997
Volunteer expenses & training	394	0	394	353
Staff travel & training	0	840	840	2,777
Social worker	2,549	0	2,549	800
Rent, rates & insurance (note 2)	6,135	7,000	13,135	11,516
IT, telephone & internet	4,824	0	4,824	4,772
Utilities, cleaning & maintenance.	4,204	0	4,204	2,221
Stationery, printing & postage	1,943	0	1,943	903
Publications & subscriptions	309	0	309	243
Web & promotional costs	179	0	179	95
Client outings & welfare costs	2,587	0	2,587	169
Depreciation	183	1,152	1,335	1,310
Governance Costs	0	572	572	534
Other expenses	9,238	7,997	17,235	10,013
Total	32,494	132,786	165,280	170,703

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2023 (CONT'D...)

	Computer Equipment £
5. Fixed Assets	
Cost	
At 1 April 2022	14,871
Additions	0
At 31 March 2023	<u>14,871</u>
Depreciation	
At 1 April 2022	12,605
Charge for year	1,336
At 31 March 2023	<u>13,941</u>
Net Book Value	
At 31 March 2022	2,266
At 31 March 2023	<u><u>930</u></u>

	2023 £	2022 £
6. Debtors and prepayments due within one year		
Debtors	0	0
Prepayments and accrued income	21,910	9,827
	<u>21,910</u>	<u>9,827</u>

	2023 £	2022 £
7. Creditors and accruals due within one year		
Creditors	30	30
Deferred income	0	0
Accruals	10,898	8,623
	<u>10,928</u>	<u>8,653</u>

	2023 £	2022 £
8. Staff Costs		
Gross wages	107,042	126,180
Employers National Insurance costs	6,745	7,921
Employers National Insurance rebate	(5,000)	(4,000)
Pension costs	6,387	4,896
	<u>115,174</u>	<u>134,997</u>

No employee earned more than £60,000.

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2023 (CONT'D...)

9. Restricted Income Funds as at March 31 2023

Fund Name	Purpose and restriction
Big Lottery (i)	The project is partly funding the following posts- the Co-ordinator, the Office Manager, Benefits Adviser and the Complicated Caseworker.
Harpur Trust (ii)	A further two year grant was awarded by Harpur Trust to support the part of the salary costs of the part- time posts of the Finance Manager & Finance Assistant, as well as the Integration Officer salary costs.
Harpur Trust (iii)	This funding concluded in September 2022.
WW4R1 Employment Support restricted Grants (iv)	These restricted funds are funding the Employment Support work.
Bedford Borough Council (v) - Syrian Refugees	The work for this project funded by the Borough concluded May 2022.

10. Movement of Major Funds

Fund Names	Balance at 1st April 2022 £	Incoming resources £	Outgoing resources £	Transfers £	Balance at 31st March 2023 £
Other	65,111	14,387	(32,494)	0	47,004
Unrestricted Funds	65,111	14,387	(32,494)	0	47,004
WW4R1 Employment Support(iv)	20,584	33,657	(30,299)	0	23,942
Bedford Borough Council Syrian Refugee (v)	19,645	2,282	(21,927)	0	0
Bedford & Luton Community Fund	5,000	5,000	(5,000)	(5,000)	0
Beds Charitable Trust	5,000	0	0	0	5,000
Big Lottery (i)	51	50,000	(50,051)	0	0
Harpur Trust (ii)	194	25,182	(19,459)	9	5,926
Harpur Trust (iii)	9	0	0	(9)	0
Panacea Society	0	10,000	(4,897)	5,000	10,103
Small restricted grants	0	1,750	0	0	1,750
	50,483	127,871	(131,633)	0	46,721
Restricted capital reserve (Note 11)	2,007	0	(1,153)	0	854
Restricted Funds	52,490	127,871	(132,786)	0	47,575
Total Funds	117,601	142,258	(165,280)	0	94,579



Annual Report

2023

(April 2022 – March 2023)

**'A world where refugees and asylum seekers
are included, accepted and supported by
society'**

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Reference and Administrative Details

Charity name	Bedfordshire Refugee and Asylum Seeker Support (BRASS)
Registered Charity Number	1096874
OISC Number	N200100432
Office address	27b Tavistock Street Bedford, MK40 2RB

Staff

Brian Cunningham - Coordinator
Andrea Tulloch - Benefits Adviser, Integration Officer (from December 2022)
Helena Maddock - Immigration & Employment Adviser
Jon Howton - Finance Officer
Pat Porter - Admin Assistant
Rani Sheemar - Finance Manager
Sharifullah Dorani - Immigration & Employment Adviser

Volunteers

Andrea Jones	Kathy Mortimer
Anne Shortley	Lindsey Coldwell
Brenda Betts	Liz Turner
Cathy Wood	Mahmoud El Sayed
Clare Ball	Michael Barber
David Porter	Nicola Lindsay
David Thomas	Patricia Porter
Gordon James	Sabina Billing
Helena Maddock	Sally Hilliard
Jane Marriott	Sharifullah Dorani
John Esam	Sidney Miller
Joanna Clark	Sue Horn
John Watkins	

Trustees

Morris Johns (Chair)	Cathy Moorhouse
Victoria Hilliard (Vice Chair)	James Biggs
Sanja Radic (Secretary)	Jo Tester
Cassandra Howes	

Structure, Governance and Management

Governing Document

BRASS is a registered charity governed by a constitution that was adopted on 1st October 1999 and then revised on 18th September 2002 and 5th March 2003. BRASS is a non-political, voluntary organisation, established for the benefit of refugees and asylum seekers in the County of Bedfordshire to assist in the relief of poverty, hardship or distress.

Organisational Structure

BRASS employs 1 full-time member of staff; a Project Co-ordinator overseeing day to day business. and a Resettlement worker supporting Syrian and Afghan Refugees who have been resettled in Bedford as part of the government's resettlement programme. We also employ a number of part time staff; a Benefits Adviser, 2 Immigration Advisers, 2 Employment Advisers, an Integration Officer (from December 2022), a Finance Manager, a Finance Officer and an office Manager. Staff are supported by a team of dedicated volunteers, making our services excellent value for money. Services are delivered from a town centre, local government owned property leased by BRASS. A board of skilled and experienced trustees drawn from the local community oversee and govern services.

Recruitment and Appointment of Trustees

BRASS recognises that the recruitment and selection of new trustees can strongly influence our future effectiveness. The organisation aims to follow good practice in this field as well as the provisions of our constitution. All BRASS trustees are elected at the Annual General Meeting or are co-opted. When looking to recruit new trustees, the committee will attempt to fill any gaps in skills, knowledge and experience of our current trustees and reflect the diversity of the communities in which we operate. We will use the most appropriate ways of recruiting new trustees, including local networks and advertising. We will prepare role descriptions for trustees, ensure that all potential trustees meet all eligibility criteria and ask all potential trustees about any possible conflicts of interest.

All trustee nominations are presented at the Annual General Meeting or the next Executive Committee. They will then be invited to meet with the chairperson to discuss their nomination and this discussion will be recorded on their nomination paper and then, once accepted, their name and details will be given to the Charities Commission.

Relationships with Other Organisations

BRASS believes that by building capacity through partnership working we can facilitate sustainability of service provision. The work of BRASS complements other services through the co-ordinator's involvement with The Equalities and New Migration Partnership and the Bedfordshire Advice Forum – local multi-

agency forums where issues are raised, information exchanged and partnership solutions explored. BRASS is a key participant in the organisation of the annual Bedford Refugee Week which holds events to raise awareness of the issues facing refugees and asylum seekers.

BRASS has strong working relationships with local organisations so that individuals can get support from the organisation best placed to provide it. Luton Law Centre has qualified solicitors and case workers who take referrals from BRASS and provide telephone support to BRASS advisers. There is cross referral of clients between BRASS and the Citizens Advice Bureau and the Polish British Integration Centre. BRASS makes referrals to the local MP Mohammad Yasin who helps with representations to the Home Office for specific cases. Referrals are received from the Social Care Team, which is responsible for unaccompanied under-18 asylum seekers, for both advice at the drop-in and English tuition. Community Voluntary Service (CVS) provides a regular supply of enthusiastic and committed volunteers and Bedford Borough Council supports BRASS and contributes to Refugee Week.

BRASS works in partnership with both local and national charities. Advice and support are provided by the Refugee Council, which is the largest refugee agency in the UK. BRASS is a referral organisation for clients requiring provisions via the Bedford Foodbank.

Supporting the local voluntary sector and working towards some financial self-sustainability has become an important part of the organisational ethic.

Risk Management

The main risk again this year has been Covid and the earlier part of the year meant continuing with telephone advice with face to face meetings only when necessary and with Covid measures in place including plastic screens, face masks, sanitisers, social distancing and good ventilation and we had to much reduce our social activities. Towards the beginning of the year, a cautious reopening of services commenced. We were fully functioning again for most of the year and continue with safety measures such as good air circulation in place

We ensure that our health and safety policy, fire risk assessment and fire safety management plan are regularly reviewed and updated. The building and our services are appropriately insured to safeguard the organisation and volunteers with the tutoring project are subject to DBS checks in order to protect our clients. Our drop-in advice service is regulated by the Office of the Immigration Services Commission (OISC) and we are regularly audited.

As with other small charities, BRASS is affected by external factors, particularly in terms of the economy and legal changes affecting asylum seekers and refugees. The economic situation nationally continues to affect fundraising and BRASS has done well to secure a 5 year lottery grant. BRASS continues to seek and secure other grants which allow us to maintain and expand our services. BRASS has had members of staff successfully qualify for OISC level 1. They are supervised by a member of staff qualified to level 2. In addition, it is important for BRASS that we are able to provide volunteers with training and progression

in return for their commitment. BRASS is also affected by media coverage of refugees and asylum seekers. This can result in increased interest in helping our clients, but it can also have a negative impact when prejudice against refugees and asylum seekers increases.

Internally, BRASS has a group of committed trustees with skills and experience that can help with the development of the organisation. The National Lottery Community Fund grant provides longer term stability for our staff and the ability to expand the number of staff we employ and therefore the capacity to expand our services. Our success in fundraising also presents some challenges as many trusts will only fund an organisation for a limited time, which means we have to be increasingly proactive in seeking funders. We are fortunate to have a good number of committed volunteers, enabling us to provide reliable and high-quality services beyond our drop-in advice service.

The organisation has a policy to hold financial reserves of six months, a level which we have now achieved and exceeded.



Message from the Chair of Trustees

Dear Trustees, Supporters, and Friends of BRASS,

I am pleased to present the Annual Report for 2022/23 on behalf of BRASS. As the Chair of Trustees, I am humbled and honoured to provide an overview of our organisation's activities, achievements, and contributions over the past year.

BRASS remains committed to its mission of providing support, hope, and opportunities for refugees and asylum seekers who have sought refuge in Bedford. The year presented numerous challenges, but our dedicated team and generous supporters have continued to make a significant impact in the lives of those in need.



Key Highlights and Achievements:

1. **Advocacy and Awareness:** BRASS remains actively involved in advocacy efforts to raise awareness about the refugees' issues, and advocate for better policies and support systems for refugees. Our campaigns reached a broader audience, resulting in increased public understanding and support, particularly in the Sharnbrook area, where there was concern about possible local hostility to the presence of a new asylum hotel in the village.
2. **English Language Lessons:** Our education programs have continued to thrive, ensuring access to quality lessons for the refugees and asylum seekers.
3. **Social Programme:** We organised a variety of events which encouraged the refugees and local Bedfordians to meet each other; for example, in a friendly football competition, which allowed refugees and local teams to compete with each other. Other social events, like a coach trip to Wicksteed Park, provided the families with rare opportunities to unwind in relaxed surroundings.
4. **Advisory Sessions.** The drop-in days have been expanded to provide more opportunities for the refugees to come and seek advice on various issues.

Our success would not have been possible without the dedication of our staff, volunteers, and the unwavering support of our donors, partners, and trustees. We extend our heartfelt gratitude to each of you for your contributions to our cause.

Challenges and Future Plans: While we have achieved significant milestones, challenges remain. The ongoing refugee crisis, compounded by a sometimes hostile media, requires us to remain vigilant and responsive. In the coming year, we aim to:

- Strengthen partnerships with other organizations to enhance our impact.
- Continue advocating for refugee rights and improved policies.
- Ensure the efficient and transparent use of resources to maximize our effectiveness.

In conclusion, I want to emphasize that the work we do at BRASS is not possible without your support. Together, we have made a profound difference in the lives of refugees, providing them with hope and opportunities for a better future. As we look ahead, let us remain steadfast in our commitment to this noble cause.



Thank you for your unwavering support and dedication to BRASS. We invite you to join us in the journey ahead as we strive to make a positive impact on the lives of refugees in Bedford.

Sincerely,
Morris Johns

Morris Johns, Chair of Trustees

Co-ordinator's Report

The most significant change in service for us this year was the re-starting of drop-in advice in person having done mostly by phone during Covid. We expanded drop-in hours from Tuesday and Wednesday to opening Thursday also. But I will let Sharif tell you more about that.



We also started having social work placement students again. Melissa and Veronica helped triage at drop-in, which is great for them to have experience with clients, helping them with simpler matters also. They also helped with social activities including updating our myth buster leaflets to give out at our market stall during refugee week and helped organise our 5-a-side football tournament which went ahead for the first time post Covid. Thanks to the BPHA, Bedfordshire Police, PBIC, social workers and to refugee teams who attended and referees and other helpers who came despite the rain!



We had a new Integration officer start in late 2022. Andrea is also our Benefits advisor. She is now looking after our tutors and helping with social activities. So our tutors are much more organised but I will let her tell you about that and lots more social activities in the future. We had a coach trip to Wicksteed park this summer. Not our usual Hunstanton seaside trip we considered the long journey was still a Covid risk so we went somewhere closer. We also had a very successful Christmas party this year with over 100 attending

Our usual client groups were added to this year by Ukrainians, around 40 to 50 mostly with our Employment project which has been a great success. We have heard that project, which was supposed to end in December is continuing with some further funding. I will let Helena tell you more about that.

Later in the year we heard rumours of a new Asylum hotel in nearby Sharnbrook. We visited the site and look forward to working with the predicted 30 asylum seeking families there and local residents some of whom are BRASS volunteers and have expressed an interest in helping.

Finally, the refugee family reunion project run by the legal department at the university of Bedford continues to run under the BRASS umbrella. There can be few better things than reuniting refugees with the families they had to leave behind.



Brian Cunningham, BRASS Co-ordinator

Service Updates

Drop-in Report

For all of the reporting year, our drop-in sessions were open on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays. We also continued to solve clients' matters through telephone appointments if they were unable to attend. We managed to help our clients with a variety of matters, including those relating to immigration, benefits, employment, (social) housing, utility bills, debts, professional driving theory licence, taxi/private hire driver applications, Uber Eats/Just Eat driver applications, school/nursery, to name but a few. As we continue to see more and more clients, we will continue to open three days a week.

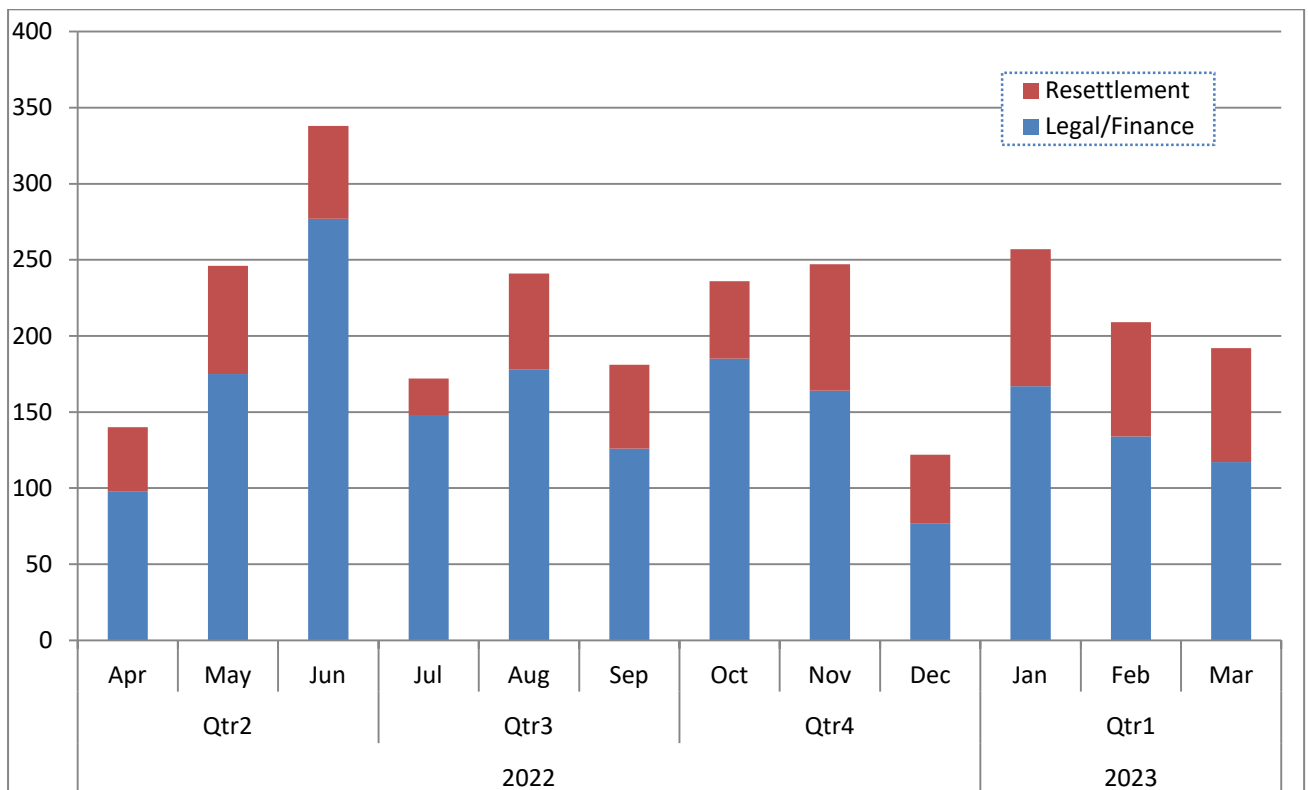
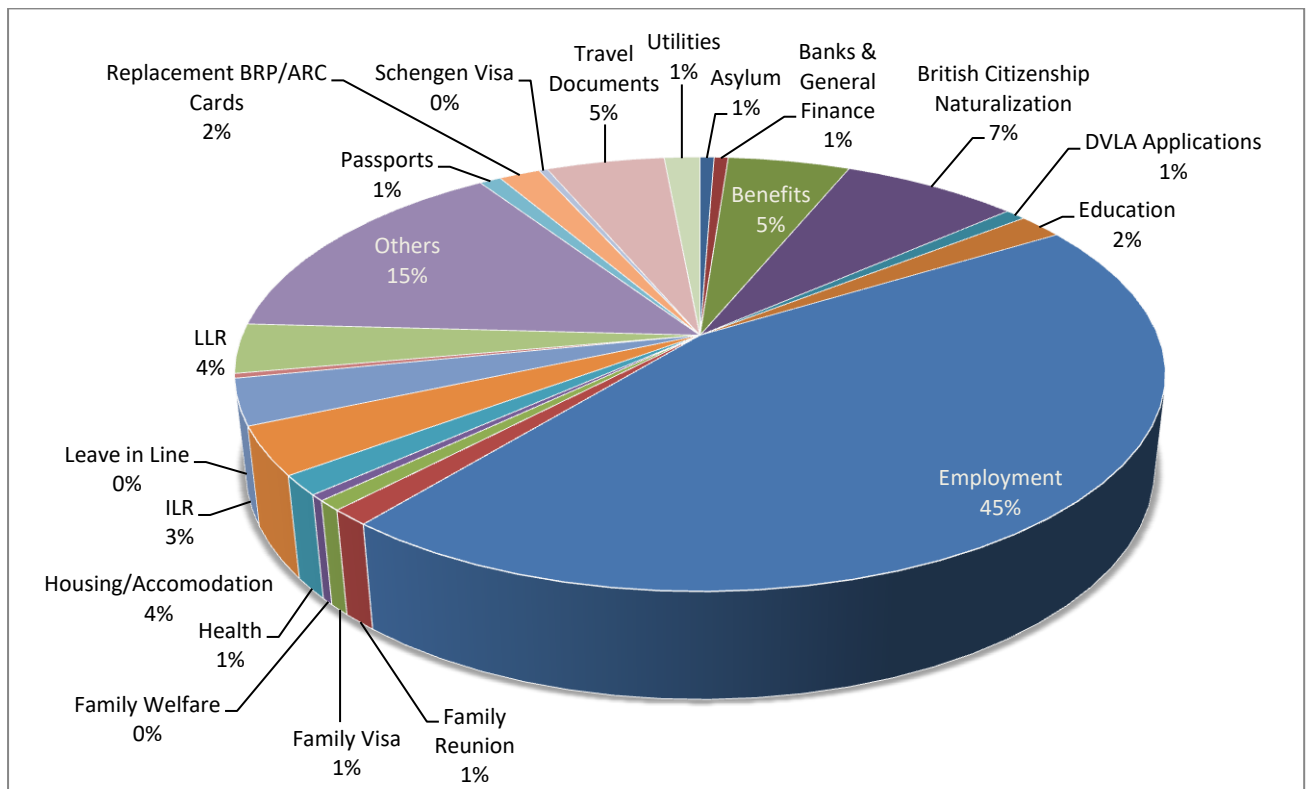
As my colleague, Helena Maddock, elaborates on this, we registered more than 80 clients for our Employment Project and sent them to a variety of courses.

We have two immigration Advisors, Helena Maddock and myself. We were very busy this year and managed to help hundreds of clients with their immigration matters, including applying for Schengen visas. Schengen visas were much more in demand this reporting year because Brexit introduced more restrictions where our clients with limited leave had to apply for a Schengen visa to travel to Europe. Furthermore, we provide a comprehensive approach when it comes to immigration matters: we help our clients fill in the application form, book a UKVCAS appointment, and sort out their supporting documents.

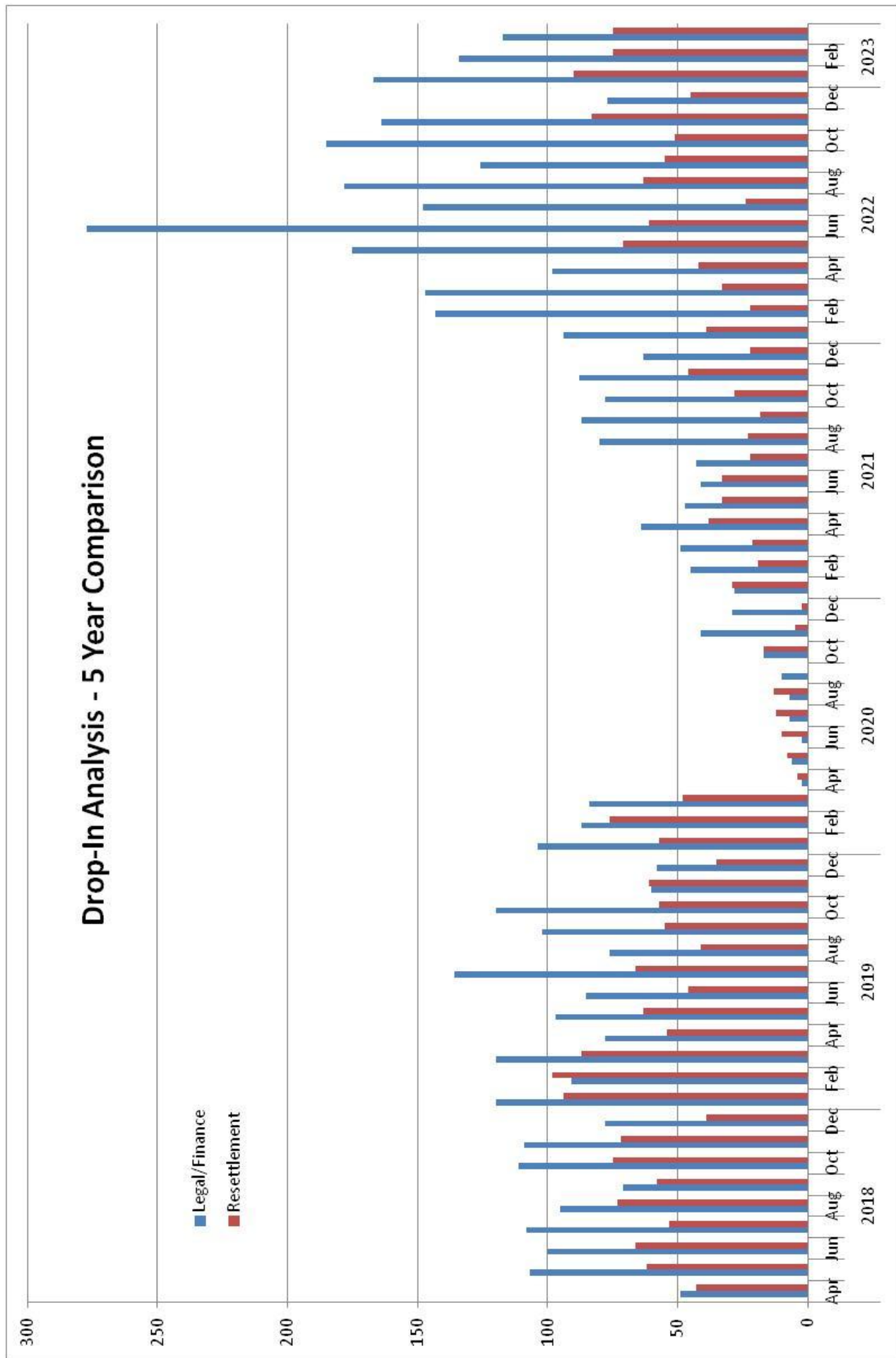
All in all, we supported hundreds of clients this reporting year. We would have not been able to do so without the support of our volunteers and social work placement students. They played a crucial part, and BRASS is grateful to them.

Sharifullah Dorani, Immigration and Employment Adviser

Drop-in Enquiries 2022-2023



Drop-in Enquiries 5 Year Comparison 2018-2023



Employment Project

In the year starting in April 2022 we registered 83 new clients for the employment project, bringing our total in March 2023 to 172 employment clients. The original end date for the project was December 2022 but we have been able to continue, with different course providers, up until September 2023. Sharif and myself work together on the employment project. We are delighted that we exceeded our targets and consequently our partners were pleased to extend the period of the project. This will continue in a different format for at least another 6 months.

We have been able to refer a lot of our clients to a variety of courses (more than 100 referrals), including driving theory and IELTS, as well as low level English courses on topics such as how to use the NHS. We have also referred clients to MENTA, a business mentoring organisation and they have helped clients who are interested in becoming self-employed or starting their own business. We had more than 30 clients' overseas qualifications recognised here by ENIC. We continue to help our clients with CV writing, finding suitable courses for them, helping with job applications and other research for them.

We have had very good feedback from our clients about the services we have been able to provide such as "I would like to express my deep gratitude to BRASS...you very kindly provided me with the things which I really needed."

Helena Maddock, Immigration and Employment Adviser

Tuition

Since starting in the role as Integration Officer, one of the biggest tasks was to get all of the volunteer tutors together to get some feedback on how they felt lessons were going. Based on the level of English that some of the students were arriving with, it was necessary to review and update learning resources. Joanna Clark, a BRASS volunteer, helped organise the resources and we were able to purchase additional resources from some fund raising organised by Kathy Mortimer, another BRASS volunteer.

The majority of students come to us from local authority care/ hostels that look after Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC). They are children and young people who have been separated from their parents or carers and are seeking asylum in the UK.

Our Afghan women's group has grown from one day a week to two days a week.

We have also had students from some countries that we have never worked with before including Ukraine. So, we have increased the number of volunteer tutors to accommodate the new students.

They are still progressing and generally use our English classes to support any learning they may receive at college or before being given a place at college, it has been very interesting scheduling all the tutors and students to rooms.

Andrea Tullock, Integration Officer

Allotment

BRASS continues to support a Syrian family at an allotment plot in Queens Park, Bedford.



Objectives and Activities

Vision

A world where refugees and asylum seekers are included, accepted and supported by society.

Mission Statement

BRASS is an established charity working to empower, inform and support refugees and asylum seekers and to protect rights with an aim to develop independence and involvement in UK society.

Strategic Objectives 2020-2023

The trustees have reviewed BRASS' strategic objectives and made some changes. These objectives will form the basis of planning our activities over the next three years. We plan to use these to inform annual targets to ensure we remain focussed on our strategic objectives.

- 1) Sustainable development of BRASS as an organisation to serve the interests and needs of refugees and asylum seekers and their families.
- 2) To enhance the ability of refugees and asylum seekers to understand and navigate UK procedures, processes and systems and promoting change to create a fairer system.
- 3) Provide opportunities for refugees and asylum seekers to increase independence, integration and confidence through learning and social activities.
- 4) Encourage participation of refugees and asylum seekers in the development and management of BRASS.
- 5) To build partnerships with other agencies, to cross refer clients, share information and campaign for the welfare of refugees and asylum seekers locally and nationally.
- 6) To inform and educate the community of Bedford and foster relationships between refugees and asylum seekers and the wider community.

Services

BRASS currently offers three drop-in advice sessions staffed by volunteers and BRASS staff - on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays, 10am-2pm, with fewer sessions conducted via telephone than in the earlier months of the year. These are accredited by the Office of the Immigration Services Commissioner (OISC) to give immigration advice. Through funding by the National Lottery Community Fund and the East of England LGA, BRASS employs a specialist benefits adviser, 2 employment advisers and 2 immigration advisers. We also support the

Refugee Legal Assistance project run by the University of Bedford on its Luton Campus on Tuesday evenings during term time, which specialises in refugee family reunions. The project has, over recent years, supported over 55 families.

Our tutoring programme matches volunteer tutors with refugees and asylum seekers who want to learn or improve their English language skills. This service is offered in the community, at the BRASS offices and online. BRASS provides small group tuition in numeracy and preparing for the Life in the UK test

Our allotment plot continues to be worked by client volunteers. Whilst our popular annual summer trip to the seaside was, sadly, not possible this year, our coach trip to Wicksteed Park for clients was oversubscribed.

BRASS plays a leading role in Refugee Week each year, organising a variety of events to promote refugee issues, this year's events revolved around raising awareness via our market stall with The Higgins, myth-busting leaflets, suggested reading Book Lists and installations at St Paul's Church.

Public Benefit

BRASS provides a range of services to support refugees and asylum seekers in the Bedford community and further afield. Free immigration advice is in short supply in this area and without the service provided by BRASS through phone and appointment advice sessions, many refugees and asylum seekers would be left to tackle the often complex immigration system alone. Advice is also provided on a range of resettlement issues including employment, housing, education and benefits. This advice enables our clients to better integrate into society and to learn to manage their own affairs independently. BRASS also provides a dedicated resettlement worker to support Syrian and Afghan refugees who are resettled in Bedford, supporting them to settle and integrate into our community.

For those who want to improve their English, BRASS' tutoring project matches volunteer tutors with clients. This relationship can often provide improved self-confidence and support with other aspects of integration. We also run classes for those wishing to improve their numeracy and those preparing for the Life in the UK test. The BRASS allotment is now quite well established, providing a sense of community to clients, as well as providing asylum seekers (who are not allowed to work) activities to fill their time as well as fresh produce to take home.

BRASS is working to inform and educate the public on issues around immigration and asylum. Asylum seekers are a stigmatised group and through our work with Refugee Week and our coordinator giving talks to groups in the Bedford area, we are encouraging the public to look differently at refugees and asylum seekers and to see the positive contribution they make to our society.

Achievements and Performance

Progress towards Strategic Objectives 2020-2023

We have measured our progress on our previous strategic objectives as the review took place at the end of the reporting year.

Sustainable development of BRASS as an organisation to serve the interests and needs of refugees and asylum seekers.

BRASS' advice sessions, our core service, is provided mainly in person with face to face meetings with clients with appropriate Covid measures in place. We also continue to provide specialist benefits advice. Through our VPRS resettlement worker, we support families, in conjunction with Bedford Borough Council, who are resettled in Bedford from refugee camps in the Middle East. Our English Language project has been boosted by the appointment of an Integration officer to run the tuition service.

The BRASS allotment continues to offer a great benefit to clients.

To enhance the ability of refugees and asylum seekers to understand UK procedures, processes and systems.

The UK immigration system can be confusing even for those of us who deal with it on a regular basis, so navigating it can be near impossible for those who are new to the country and may have limited English. Through our OISC registered drop-in immigration advice sessions, BRASS helps refugees and asylum seekers to deal with these complex systems. Advice is also provided around other non-immigration issues such as housing, employment and finance to aid integration. We are able to provide specialist advice through our immigration advisers, employment advisers and benefits adviser. Our popular English Language Tuition also gives refugees and asylum seekers the skills to better navigate British systems and our classes in numeracy and preparing for the Life in the UK test also aid integration.

Increasing independence and confidence through learning and social activities.

Our tuition project provides one-to-one/group tuition to those who wish to improve their English, numeracy and preparing for the Life in the UK test. It is hoped that this will enable them to become more independent and better able to integrate into society. Our allotment provides a place for our clients to relax, meet new people and grow their own food.

To raise awareness in wider society of issues faced by refugees and asylum seekers.

BRASS is always heavily involved with activities in Bedford celebrating Refugee Week. Myth busting leaflets are given out to members of the public and events are held at various venues around the town including a very popular football tournament and fun day in one of Bedford's public parks. We also had a publicity raising market stall where we distributed Myth busting leaflets. BRASS' coordinator gives talks to local groups and the feedback forms completed at the end of these talks indicate that perceptions of refugees and asylum seekers have been changed by what they have heard. We regularly publish positive stories about our clients and information about refugees and the asylum system on our website and Facebook page.

Encourage participation of refugees and asylum seekers in the development and management of BRASS.

BRASS continually encourages clients and former clients to become involved in BRASS, whether through attending groups and activities, becoming a volunteer or joining the committee. A former client is now on our committee and some of our volunteers have previously used our services. We have also provided social work placements to a number of students, some of whom are from a refugee background.

To build partnerships with other agencies, to cross refer clients, share information and campaign on behalf of the wellbeing of refugees and asylum seekers locally and nationally.

BRASS works with other agencies in a variety of ways. BRASS works with many local charities and networks. Our coordinator is involved with The New Migration Partnership, Bedford Borough Diversity Network and the Bedford Advice forum – local multi-agency forums where issues are raised, information exchanged and partnership solutions explored. BRASS is a key participant in the organisation of the annual Bedford Refugee Week which holds events to raise awareness of the issues facing refugees and asylum seekers.

Referrals are received from Children's Services which is responsible for unaccompanied Asylum seekers under the age of 18. The Community Voluntary Service (CVS) provides a regular supply of enthusiastic and committed volunteers and the Charity continues to receive invaluable support from the Bedford Borough.

BRASS has been very involved with Refugee Week in Bedford for many years. The aim of Refugee Week is to raise awareness of the issues faced by refugees and asylum seekers and the positive contributions they make to British society. Covid has had a serious effect upon the level of engagement in the past but we are back working with the local community in terms of giving talks to various groups in the Bedford area to change perceptions of these issues and gathering feedback from those who attend to assess changing attitudes.

Fundraising activities

We would like to thank the following organisations from whom we have received grants over the past years

The National Lottery Community Fund
Bedford Borough Council
The Beds and Luton Community Foundation
Beatrice Laing Trust
WW4R1

Harpur Trust
Wixamtree Trust
Panacea Charitable Trust
East of England LGA

We would also like to thank all of the individual donors who support BRASS through one off and regular donations.

BRASS would like to thank our fundraiser Karen Mayoh for her continued hard work and support.

Future Plans and the challenges ahead

Our services have been steadily resuming this year as we came out of Covid. We are now helping clients in numbers higher than pre Covid.

We have obtained a new five year grant with the National Lottery to help with our long term stability and continue to work other local funders.

BRASS will continue to prioritise the needs of our clients by providing good quality, reliable services. In order to safeguard BRASS and ensure that our vital services continue to be available, we will work to ensure good governance to maintain stability. BRASS is fortunate to be in a secure financial position, with more than 6 months of reserves. There are bound to be other challenges ahead, but we are confident that BRASS is well placed to face them.

Getting Involved with BRASS

Volunteers are often needed for our drop-in, English tutoring and the allotment.

If you are interested in becoming involved with BRASS as a volunteer, please contact Co-ordinator Brian Cunningham on 01234 211381 or brian@brass27b.org. For further information on any of our work, please check our website www.brassbedford.org.uk and Facebook pages www.facebook.com/brassbedford and www.facebook.com/brassallotment



Charity Registration Number: 1096874

**BEDFORDSHIRE REFUGEE AND ASYLUM SEEKER SUPPORT GROUP
(BRASS)**

TRUSTEES REPORT AND ACCOUNTS
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2023

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LEGAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION

CHARITY NAME: Bedfordshire Refugee and Asylum Seeker Support Group

OTHER NAME CHARITY IS KNOWN BY: BRASS

REGISTERED CHARITY NUMBER: 1096874

CHARITY'S PRINCIPAL ADDRESS:

27B Tavistock Street
Bedford
MK40 2RB

NAMES OF THE CHARITY TRUSTEES WHO MANAGE THE CHARITY

Victoria Hilliard
Cathy Moorhouse
Morris Johns - Chair from 3rd July 2020
Sanja Radic
James Biggs
Jo Tester
Cass Howes

PROJECT CO-ORDINATOR

Brian Cunningham

BANKERS

RBS\\
Bedford Branch
15-19 Mill Street
Bedford
MK40 3EU

Main current account held since May 2021 :-

The Co-operative Bank
Delf House
Skelmersdale
WN8 6WT

REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES

REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2023

The trustees of the charity present their report together with the financial statements for the year ended 31 March 2023, prepared in accordance with the Charities Act 2011 and the Accounting and Reporting by Charities Statement of Recommended Practice (SORP 2005).

From April 2022 to March 2023 finance meetings and trustee meetings were held quarterly, attended by the Chair, Executive Committee members and staff.

BRASS employs a Project Co-ordinator to oversee day to day business and to provide specialist advice, and full-time Syrian Family Support Officer and part-time Benefits Adviser, Integration Officer, Immigration Adviser, Finance Manager and Finance Officer. Much of the charity's work is undertaken by a team of dedicated volunteers.

OBJECTIVES AND REVIEW OF ACTIVITIES

The charity is an established non-political, voluntary organisation working to empower, inform and support refugees and asylum seekers and their families, protect their rights and enable them to develop their independence and involvement in UK society. Specifically the charity was established for the benefit of refugees and asylum seekers in the County of Bedfordshire to assist in the relief of poverty, hardship or distress. Services are delivered from a local government owned property in Bedford town centre which is leased by BRASS. Much work in the previous year was done by phone and virtually from our offices and by staff from home due to Covid. From early in this year we were back in the office seeing people under Covid conditions by appointment, by the end of this year we had returned to full drop in advice as well.

BRASS continues to have strong working relationships with local organisations providing advice so that individuals can get support from the organisations best placed to offer it. Luton Law Centre and Luton law firms have qualified solicitors and case workers who take referrals from BRASS and provide telephone support to BRASS advisors. BRASS also works with the University of Bedfordshire Law Department to assist refugees with family reunification applications. BRASS works with the Citizens Advice Bureau to cross refer clients and makes referrals to the local MP who, in specific cases, helps with representations to the Home Office.

Referrals are received from Children's Services which is responsible for unaccompanied asylum seekers under the age of 18. The Community Voluntary Service (CVS) provides a regular supply of enthusiastic and committed volunteers and the charity continues to receive invaluable support from the Bedford Borough Council who run the New Migration Partnership of which the BRASS co-ordinator is chair. The co-ordinator is also on the steering group of the Bedford Advice Forum. Bedfordshire Rural Communities Charity who previously supported our tutoring project by carrying out the relevant DBS checks, but we are now able to do these for ourselves.

BRASS works in partnership with both local and national charities. Advice and support are provided by the Refugee Council, which is the largest refugee agency in the UK, the Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants (who also offer immigration advice training courses) and Migrant Help. BRASS is also a registered referrer for Bedford Food Bank.

BRASS seeks to support the local voluntary sector and work towards financial self-sustainability. It leases its offices in Bedford town centre.

BRASS is focused on working in partnership with other organisations to share knowledge and skills, prevent duplication, maximise effectiveness, cut costs and share facilities. On behalf of the trustees of BRASS I can confirm that in carrying out our financial review we have considered and complied with our duty to have due regard to the Charity Commission's guidance on public benefit.

REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES (CONT'D...)

ACHIEVEMENTS AND PERFORMANCE

During the last financial year BRASS has supported over 400 clients. We seek to support our client group's changing needs; the changes to the Benefits system and ever increasing complexity of immigration applications has increased demands for our services. BRASS now receives funding from the Big Lottery and will provide specialist advice through a Complex Caseworker for immigration matters and a Benefits Advisor. We will be able to provide additional social activities through our Integration Officer who started this year funded by the Harpur Trust.

We increased our advice sessions from twice a week to three times a week. However, we also offer appointments with our Benefits Adviser worker and our Immigration Adviser where we feel the need is urgent or can best be addressed in person.

Our social activities have become more active again this year. Our Co-ordinator is still the chair of the Refugee Week steering group, and we had successfully organised a football tournament with refugees and other local teams. We also did a market stall giving out myth busting leaflets. BRASS' allotment is still up and running with both refugees and volunteers attending.

FINANCIAL REVIEW

As in previous years, BRASS is very fortunate to have received funding from various different sources this year.

The Big Lottery continues to fund our Co-ordinator, along with other posts and other running costs for five years.

The Harpur Trust continues its support by helping to fund our Finance Manager and Finance Officer salary costs and most recently an Integration officer. Bedford Borough Council provided continued funding support towards staff costs at the beginning of the year. Money has been used to fund a part-time Benefits Adviser.

We thank Beds and Luton Community Foundation, Panacea Society, Wixamtree Trust and WW4R1 for their continued ongoing support for funding

Total Incoming Resources during the financial year were £142,258, a significant increase on the previous year. This income has been used to provide funding to cover all our existing posts which are all filled and other direct costs and overheads. A large part of the reason for the increase in income is that the new lottery funding came into effect from April 2022. We are delighted to say that the lottery granted us this new funding which started at the beginning of the new financial year and that this funding is for five years which means we will be free from having to put together a new lottery bid for five years. Now that we have successfully secured this funding we now have more time to concentrate on putting in other bids. We are asking for funding over more than one year as we have done in the past. We are awaiting outcome of some of these new bids and are planning others early in the new financial year.

Costs decreased this year by approximately 3% to £165,280 mainly due to the Syrian working coming to close. There has been an increase in some staff hours mainly to support the growing needs of the increasing number of refugees coming into the country.

REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES (CONT'D...)

FINANCIAL REVIEW RESERVES POLICY.

BRASS reserves as at 31st March 2023, were £94,579. Of these funds £47,575 were restricted funds, the remaining £47,004 were unrestricted funds. The Trustee Board have established a policy whereby it aims to maintain sufficient unrestricted funds not invested in tangible fixed assets and not required to meet future budgeted expenditure, being the "free reserves", to support the future growth of the charity and provide sufficient reserves for dealing with possible contingencies such as short-term cessation of project activity or redundancy.

Approved by the trustees and signed on their behalf by:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M. Johns'.

Morris Johns
Chair
Date: 15th September 2023

INDEPENDENT EXAMINER'S REPORT TO THE TRUSTEES OF BEDFORDSHIRE REFUGEE AND ASYLUM SEEKER SUPPORT GROUP

I report on the financial statements of the charity for the year ended 31 March 2023 as set out on pages 7 to 12.

This report is made solely to the charity's trustees, as a body, in accordance with section 145 of the Charities Act 2011 ('the 2011 Act'). My work has been undertaken so that I might state to the charity's trustees those matters I am required to state to them in this report and for no other purpose. To the fullest extent permitted by law, I do not accept or assume responsibility to anyone other than the charity and the charity's trustees as a body, for my work, for this report, or for the opinions I have formed.

Respective responsibilities of trustees and examiner

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

It is my responsibility to:

- * examine the financial statements under section 145 of the 2011 Act;
- * to follow the procedures laid down in the General Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the 2011 Act; and
- * 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 financial statements presented with those records. It also includes consideration of any unusual items or disclosures in the financial statements 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 financial statements present a 'true and fair view' and the report is limited to those matters set out in the statement below.

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 financial statements which accord with the accounting records and comply with the accounting 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 financial statements to be reached.



John Esam
Mayfield Lodge
1 Main Road,
Biddenham
MK40 4BB

Dated: 15th September 2023

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES AS OF 31ST MARCH 2023

Incoming Resources	Note	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	Total 2023 £	Total 2022 £
Grants receivable	3	8,000	90,182	98,182	65,170
Donations and other fund raising activities		3,305	37,339	40,644	52,264
Rental income		0	0	0	0
Investment income		114	0	114	43
Other income		2,968	350	3,318	4,655
Total Incoming Resources		14,387	127,871	142,258	122,132
Resources Expended					
Costs of generating funds		7,950	1500	9,450	10,200
Charitable activities	4	24,544	130,714	155,258	159,969
Governance costs		0	572	572	534
Total Resources Expended		32,494	132,786	165,280	170,703
Net Incoming/ (Outgoing) Resources		(18,107)	(4,915)	(23,022)	(48,571)
Funds brought forward		65,111	52,490	117,601	166,172
Transfers between funds		0	0	0	0
Funds carried forward		47,004	47,575	94,579	117,601

All of the charity's activities derive from continuing operations during the above two periods.

BALANCE SHEET AT 31 MARCH 2023

	Note	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	Total 2023 £	Total 2022 £
Fixed Assets					
Tangible assets	5	76	854	930	2,266
Current Assets					
Debtors and Prepayments	6	1,400	20,510	21,910	9,827
Cash and Bank in hand		45,528	37,139	82,667	114,161
Total Current Assets		46,928	57,649	105,507	123,988
Creditors Amounts falling due within one year	7	0	10,928	10,928	8,653
Net Current Assets		46,928	46,721	94,579	115,335
Net Assets		47,004	47,575	94,579	117,601
Funds of the Charity					
Unrestricted funds	10	46,091	0	46,091	63,617
Restricted funds	10	0	46,721	46,721	50,483
Unrestricted & Restricted capital reserve		76	854	930	2,266
Designated funds		837	0	837	1,235
Total funds		47,004	47,575	94,579	117,601

Trustees' Responsibilities

The trustees acknowledge their responsibility in complying with the requirements of the Charities Commission and confirm that the accounts have been prepared in accordance with Accounting and Reporting by Charities (SORP 2005) and Charities Act 2011.

Approved by the trustees and signed on their behalf by:



Name Morris Johns, Dated 15th September 20223

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2023

1. Accounting Policies

Statement of compliance

The financial statements have been prepared on the basis of historic cost and in accordance with the applicable United Kingdom Reporting Standards, the Charities Act 2011 and the Accounting and Reporting by Charities Statement of Recommended Practice (SORP 2005).

Basis of Preparation

As permitted by SORP 2005 the trustees have adapted the heading used to describe Incoming Resources and Resources Expended within the Statement of Financial Activities when presenting the results for the year.

Incoming Resources

Incoming Resources are recognised when received or receivable by the charity. Income is derived from fund raising activities, donations and the sub-letting of rented property. Grants are recognised on receipt or award unless, in the judgement of the trustees, conditions attached to the grant make it improbable that they will be received.

Restricted Funds

Restricted Funds are to be used for a specific purpose as laid down by the donor. Expenditure which meets these criteria is identified against the fund.

Unrestricted Funds

Unrestricted Funds are incoming resources received or receivable generated for charitable purposes and available for use at the discretion of the trustees in furtherance of the general objectives of the charity and have not been designated for other purposes.

Paid Employees

The charity employs a Project Co-ordinator, part-time Facilities (Support) Officer and part-time Benefits Advisor and a Syrian Family Support Worker. These four posts are funded through restricted grants.

Trustee Expenses

There were no payments or reimbursements made to any trustees during the financial year.

Fixed Assets

Assets with a useful life of more than two years are capitalised at cost and depreciated over their useful life.

Depreciation on computer equipment is charged at 33% on a straight line basis.

Fixed Assets funded by capital grants are capitalised and a restricted capital reserve created. The reserve is reduced by the depreciation charge.

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2023 (CONT'D...)

2. Property & Operating Leases

i) Operating Lease Commitments - Nil.

ii) The annual commitment for the land and buildings lease amounts to £10,059 (£9,375 in 2021-22) where the term remaining is between one and five years. There are no further lease commitments.

Due to the pandemic, the authority reduced the rent charge, rent charges have increased for the current year.

3. Income from Grants, Donations and Legacies:

	Unrestricted Funds	Restricted Funds	Total 2023	Total 2022
	£	£	£	£
Donations from other charities, companies	8,000	90,182	98,182	52,264
Donations from trusts, individuals and similar	3,305	37,339	40,644	65,170
	11,305	127,521	138,826	117,434

4. Resources Expended

	Unrestricted Funds	Restricted Funds	Total 2023	Total 2022
	£	£	£	£
Staff payroll costs	(51)	115,225	115,174	134,997
Volunteer expenses & training	394	0	394	353
Staff travel & training	0	840	840	2,777
Social worker	2,549	0	2,549	800
Rent, rates & insurance (note 2)	6,135	7,000	13,135	11,516
IT, telephone & internet	4,824	0	4,824	4,772
Utilities, cleaning & maintenance.	4,204	0	4,204	2,221
Stationery, printing & postage	1,943	0	1,943	903
Publications & subscriptions	309	0	309	243
Web & promotional costs	179	0	179	95
Client outings & welfare costs	2,587	0	2,587	169
Depreciation	183	1,152	1,335	1,310
Governance Costs	0	572	572	534
Other expenses	9,238	7,997	17,235	10,013
Total	32,494	132,786	165,280	170,703

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2023 (CONT'D...)

	Computer Equipment £
5. Fixed Assets	
Cost	
At 1 April 2022	14,871
Additions	0
At 31 March 2023	<u>14,871</u>
Depreciation	
At 1 April 2022	12,605
Charge for year	1,336
At 31 March 2023	<u>13,941</u>
Net Book Value	
At 31 March 2022	2,266
At 31 March 2023	<u><u>930</u></u>

	2023 £	2022 £
6. Debtors and prepayments due within one year		
Debtors	0	0
Prepayments and accrued income	21,910	9,827
	<u>21,910</u>	<u>9,827</u>

	2023 £	2022 £
7. Creditors and accruals due within one year		
Creditors	30	30
Deferred income	0	0
Accruals	10,898	8,623
	<u>10,928</u>	<u>8,653</u>

	2023 £	2022 £
8. Staff Costs		
Gross wages	107,042	126,180
Employers National Insurance costs	6,745	7,921
Employers National Insurance rebate	(5,000)	(4,000)
Pension costs	6,387	4,896
	<u>115,174</u>	<u>134,997</u>

No employee earned more than £60,000.

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2023 (CONT'D...)

9. Restricted Income Funds as at March 31 2023

Fund Name	Purpose and restriction
Big Lottery (i)	The project is partly funding the following posts- the Co-ordinator, the Office Manager, Benefits Adviser and the Complicated Caseworker.
Harpur Trust (ii)	A further two year grant was awarded by Harpur Trust to support the part of the salary costs of the part- time posts of the Finance Manager & Finance Assistant, as well as the Integration Officer salary costs.
Harpur Trust (iii)	This funding concluded in September 2022.
WW4R1 Employment Support restricted Grants (iv)	These restricted funds are funding the Employment Support work.
Bedford Borough Council (v) - Syrian Refugees	The work for this project funded by the Borough concluded May 2022.

10. Movement of Major Funds

Fund Names	Balance at 1st April 2022 £	Incoming resources £	Outgoing resources £	Transfers £	Balance at 31st March 2023 £
Other	65,111	14,387	(32,494)	0	47,004
Unrestricted Funds	65,111	14,387	(32,494)	0	47,004
WW4R1 Employment Support(iv)	20,584	33,657	(30,299)	0	23,942
Bedford Borough Council Syrian Refugee (v)	19,645	2,282	(21,927)	0	0
Bedford & Luton Community Fund	5,000	5,000	(5,000)	(5,000)	0
Beds Charitable Trust	5,000	0	0	0	5,000
Big Lottery (i)	51	50,000	(50,051)	0	0
Harpur Trust (ii)	194	25,182	(19,459)	9	5,926
Harpur Trust (iii)	9	0	0	(9)	0
Panacea Society	0	10,000	(4,897)	5,000	10,103
Small restricted grants	0	1,750	0	0	1,750
	50,483	127,871	(131,633)	0	46,721
Restricted capital reserve (Note 11)	2,007	0	(1,153)	0	854
Restricted Funds	52,490	127,871	(132,786)	0	47,575
Total Funds	117,601	142,258	(165,280)	0	94,579

Accounts



Annual Report

2022

(April 2021 – March 2022)

'A world where refugees and asylum seekers
are included, accepted and supported by
society'

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Reference and administrative details

Charity name	Bedfordshire Refugee and Asylum Seeker Support (BRASS)
Registered Charity Number	1096874
OISC Number	N200100432
Office address	27b Tavistock Street Bedford, MK40 2RB

Staff

Brian Cunningham, Coordinator
Wafia Ahmed, VPRS Resettlement Worker
Sharifullah Dorani, Immigration & Employment Adviser
Jon Howton, Finance Officer
Helena Maddock, Immigration & Employment Adviser
Lara McCormack, Benefits Adviser (left January 2022)
Pat Porter, Admin Assistant
Rani Sheemar, Finance Manager
Andrea Tulloch, Benefits Adviser (joined March 2022)

Current & Recent Volunteers

Abeer Ahmed	Elizabeth Ridley
Aisha Gooding	Gary Sutcliffe
Andrea Jones	Gordon James
Anita Hamrouni	Helena Maddock
Anita Hanwell	Irina Foster
Anne Shortley	Jane Marriott
Annie Doise	John Blakey
Ash Ali	John Osman
Babs Vine-Blakey	Kathy Mortimer
Baraah Atef Abdula	Krystal Heath
Bekkie Hart	Liz Turner
Benedict Heal	Michelle Thomas
Bob Edwards	Mahmoud El Sayed
Brenda Betts	Michael Barber
Caroline Forni	Mona Sulieman
Catherine Veitch	Nabil Chabaan
Cathy Wood	Nacera
Chris Hilliard	Nadia Gasmi
Clare Ball	Nicola Harbour
Claudia Zugno	Nicola Lindsay
David Porter	Pam Hider
David Thomas	Patricia Porter
David Whittome	Peter Jones
Doha Alneser	Rachel Goodge
Doreen Richardson	Rainy Blair
Elena Gualco	Sabina Billing

Sally Hilliard
Sally Monkman
Sharifullah Dorani
Shubham Kalyan
Sidney Miller

Silvia Borelli
Sue Horn
Sumana Carlton-Smith
Sylvia MacDowell

Trustees

Morris Johns (Chair)
Victoria Hilliard (Vice Chair)
Cathy Moorhouse
Jo Tester

John Lehal (Treasurer)
Sanja Radic (Secretary)
James Biggs

Structure, Governance and Management

Governing Document

BRASS is a registered charity governed by a constitution that was adopted on 1st October 1999 and then revised on 18th September 2002 and 5th March 2003. BRASS is a non-political, voluntary organisation, established for the benefit of refugees and asylum seekers in the County of Bedfordshire to assist in the relief of poverty, hardship or distress.

Organisational Structure

BRASS employs 2 full-time members of staff; a Project Co-ordinator overseeing day to day business and a Resettlement worker supporting Syrian and Afghan Refugees who have been resettled in Bedford as part of the government's resettlement programme. We also employ a number of part time staff; a Benefits Adviser, 2 Immigration Advisers, 2 Employment Advisers, a Finance Manager and Officer and Administrative staff. Staff are supported by a team of dedicated volunteers, making our services excellent value for money. Services are delivered from a town centre, local government owned property leased by BRASS. A board of skilled and experienced trustees drawn from the local community oversee and govern services.

Recruitment and Appointment of Trustees

BRASS recognises that the recruitment and selection of new trustees can strongly influence our future effectiveness. The organisation aims to follow good practice in this field as well as the provisions of our constitution. All BRASS trustees are elected at the Annual General Meeting or are co-opted. When looking to recruit new trustees, the committee will attempt to fill any gaps in skills, knowledge and experience of our current trustees and reflect the diversity of the communities in which we operate. We will use the most appropriate ways of recruiting new trustees, including local networks and advertising. We will prepare role descriptions for trustees, ensure that all potential trustees meet all eligibility criteria and ask all potential trustees about any possible conflicts of interest.

All trustee nominations are presented at the Annual General Meeting or the next Executive Committee. They will then be invited to meet with the chairperson to discuss their nomination and this discussion will be recorded on their nomination paper and then, once accepted, their name and details will be given to the Charities Commission.

Relationships with Other Organisations

BRASS believes that by building capacity through partnership working we can facilitate sustainability of service provision. The work of BRASS complements other services through the co-ordinator's involvement with The Equalities and New Migration Partnership and the Bedfordshire Advice Forum – local multi-agency forums where issues are raised, information exchanged and partnership

solutions explored. BRASS is a key participant in the organisation of the annual Bedford Refugee Week which holds events to raise awareness of the issues facing refugees and asylum seekers.

BRASS has strong working relationships with local organisations so that individuals can get support from the organisation best placed to provide it. Luton Law Centre has qualified solicitors and case workers who take referrals from BRASS and provide telephone support to BRASS advisers. There is cross referral of clients between BRASS and the Citizens Advice Bureau and the Polish British Integration Centre. BRASS makes referrals to the local MP Mohammad Yasin who helps with representations to the Home Office for specific cases. Referrals are received from the Social Care Team, which is responsible for unaccompanied under-18 asylum seekers, for both advice at the drop-in and English tuition. Community Voluntary Service (CVS) provides a regular supply of enthusiastic and committed volunteers and Bedford Borough Council supports BRASS and contributes to Refugee Week.

BRASS works in partnership with both local and national charities. Advice and support are provided by the Refugee Council, which is the largest refugee agency in the UK. BRASS is a referral organisation for clients requiring provisions via the Bedford Foodbank.

Supporting the local voluntary sector and working towards some financial self-sustainability has become an important part of the organisational ethic.

Risk Management

The main risk again this year has been Covid and the earlier part of the year meant continuing with telephone advice with face to face meetings only when absolutely necessary and with Covid measures in place including plastic screens, face masks, sanitisers, social distancing and good ventilation and we had to much reduce our social activities. Towards the end of the year, a cautious reopening of services commenced.

We ensure that our health and safety policy, fire risk assessment and fire safety management plan are regularly reviewed and updated. The building and our services are appropriately insured to safeguard the organisation and volunteers with the tutoring project are subject to DBS checks in order to protect our clients. Our drop-in advice service is regulated by the Office of the Immigration Services Commission (OISC) and we are regularly audited.

As with other small charities, BRASS is affected by external factors, particularly in terms of the economy and legal changes affecting asylum seekers and refugees. The economic situation nationally continues to affect fundraising and BRASS is coming to the end of an extended 5 year grant from the National Lottery Community Fund which has provided a significant level of security to the charity and we are now beginning the process in applying for another grant. BRASS continues to seek and secure other grants which allow us to maintain and expand our services. BRASS has had 3 members of staff successfully qualify for OISC level 1. They are supervised by a member of staff qualified to level 2. In addition, it is important for BRASS that we are able to provide volunteers with

training and progression in return for their commitment. BRASS is also affected by media coverage of refugees and asylum seekers. This can result in increased interest in helping our clients, but it can also have a negative impact when prejudice against refugees and asylum seekers increases.

Internally, BRASS has a group of committed trustees with skills and experience that can help with the development of the organisation. The National Lottery Community Fund grant provides longer term stability for our staff and the ability to expand the number of staff we employ and therefore the capacity to expand our services. Our success in fundraising also presents some challenges as many trusts will only fund an organisation for a limited time, which means we have to be increasingly proactive in seeking funders. We are fortunate to have a good number of committed volunteers, enabling us to provide reliable and high-quality services beyond our drop-in advice service.

The organisation has a policy to hold financial reserves of six months, a level which we have now achieved and exceeded.

Message from the Chair of Trustees



Although the early part of the reporting year was affected by the lingering effects of Covid-19, BRASS began a gradual restart of its activities in the second half, in line with the government advice.

Throughout the pandemic crisis, our staff have dealt with all the associated challenges with professionalism and a commitment to ensuring that asylum seekers and refugees in Bedford continue to have access to high quality, free, professional advice.

The BRASS team continued to provide teaching classes online and support for those seeking refuge was provided. We took part in Refugee Week after a break of two years. Early in 2022, with the Ukrainian crisis, came new challenges and problems and BRASS assisted other local organisations in dealing with the crisis.

I am confident that next year, BRASS will be fully operational and continue to make a difference to the lives of our clients; by fulfilling our vitally important mission of providing guidance and support to individuals and refugee families coming to live in Bedford.

In October, myself and my fellow trustee, Cathy Moorhouse, were delighted to welcome to BRASS the Bishop of Bedford, Rt Revd Richard Atkinson, to talk about the work of BRASS, particularly during the pandemic.

I am grateful to all our partners, funders, supporters, volunteers and, of course, our staff for their dedication and professionalism.



Morris Johns, Chair of Trustees

Co-ordinator's Report

It has been an amazing year as we have moved from a position of the office being pretty much closed completely in April 2021 and mostly only giving phone advice with some remote tutoring to being almost fully open again by March 2022! Indeed, we have expanded services to offer appointment/drop-in advice sessions on Thursdays to add to our traditional Tuesdays and Wednesdays. More from Sharifullah on that below.



Towards the end of the year we had a great flowering of our tutoring project as you can read in Andrea's tutoring report below. We are so grateful for all she has done for us this year as a volunteer co-ordinator for tutors and students.

Social activities have suffered due to Covid still with no Christmas party or, sadly, our previously very popular coach trips to Hunstanton beach. Even with the vaccine rollout we felt that a two and a half hour trip on a confined coach and back again would not be sensible. We are thinking of shorter coach trips this coming summer to Wicksteed Park where we have been before.



But we did have a Refugee Week market stall this year in June. Although members of the public were understandably reluctant to take our Myth Busting leaflets, many did stop to chat and it was nice to see many of our clients and volunteers in person again. There were also socially distanced Refugee Week events with The Higgins and St Paul's Church.

The Refugee Family Reunion Project in partnership with the University of Bedford Legal Department has continued, partly in person and partly virtually. The virtual aspect has been helpful as clients coming from outside the area were spared travelling long distances.

We have a new member of staff, Andrea Tulloch, who joined us as a Benefits Adviser on Wednesdays and Thursdays. She has over a year's experience as a volunteer at the nearby Citizen's Advice Bureau. We have also had the return of Social Work Placement Students to assist us at our Drop-In/Advice sessions as well as three new volunteers helping on different drop-in days. We also have a new trustee, Jo Tester, who for many years was the community engagement officer for Bedford Borough as well as a long term member of our Refugee Week Steering Group, so she knows us well.

I am very grateful to our trustees, staff and volunteers across all our services. We hope to expand our services as, hopefully, we have weathered the storm of Covid and can do even more to help our clients.

With the news in Ukraine it may well be that we have a new set of refugees to come and BRASS will be needed as much, if not more, than ever.

Brian Cunningham, BRASS Co-ordinator

Service Updates

Drop-in Report

For much of this reporting year, Covid-19 cases were high in Bedford. Accordingly, we had telephone-only appointments unless the matter was a special emergency. We managed to help our clients on the telephone with their issues, including filling in immigration application forms. We also registered dozens of clients for our Employment Scheme and sent them to ESOL and other courses. As the Covid-19 cases went down, we began to see our clients on an appointment-only basis. Towards the end of 2021, however, we began to open as usual. In fact, we increased our drop-in days from two to three days a week. We are now open on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays.

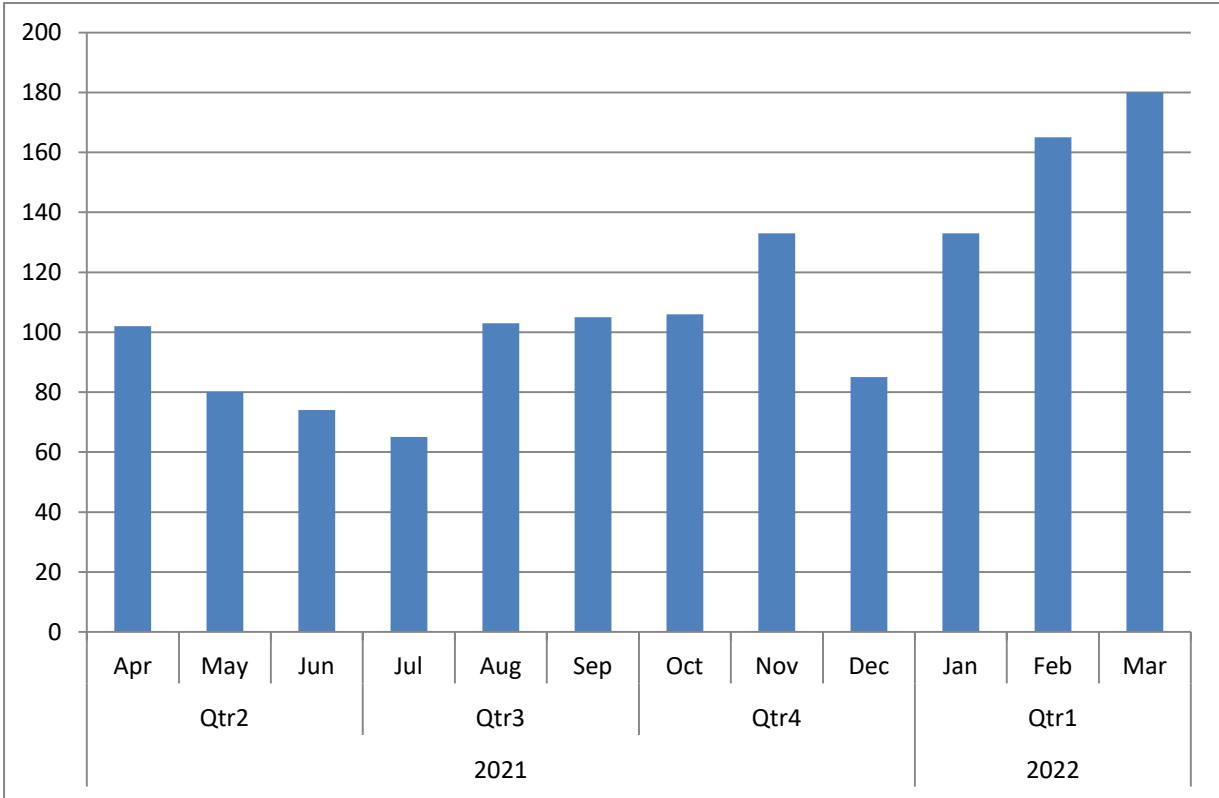
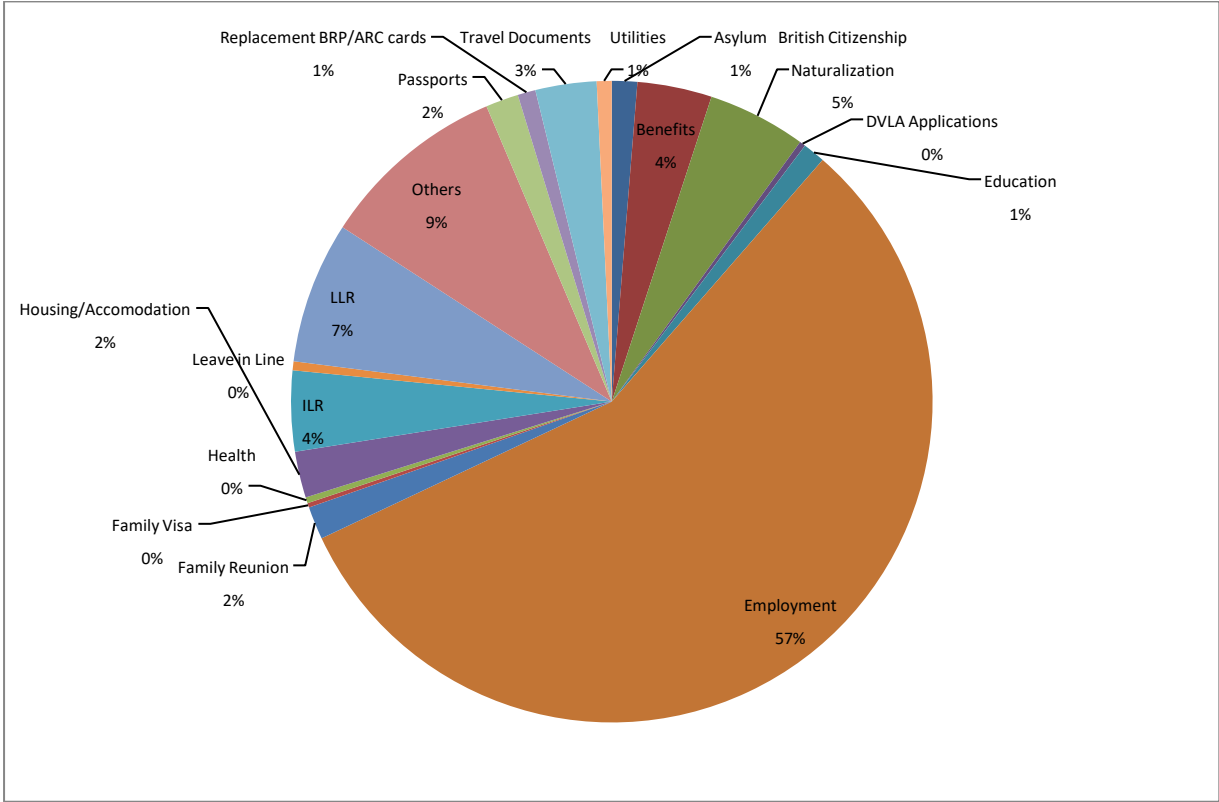
We have two Immigration Advisers - Helena Maddock and Sharifullah Dorani - who support clients with immigration matters. Over the past year, they, under Brian's supervision, have been able to help dozens of clients with their immigration applications. They also double up as Employment Advisers. This reporting year, they have registered nearly 80 new clients - including the newest Afghan arrivals - who have been referred to numerous courses to enhance their linguistic and other skills necessary for employment.

Andrea started in March at BRASS as a Benefits Adviser. She previously worked as a volunteer with Citizens Advice Borough, Bedford where she got most of her skills and experience. Working in the bank sector also enabled her to develop the customer service skills necessary to help a variety of clients at BRASS. Initially, it was a slow start for her because BRASS was previously closed, and clients did not know that BRASS had a new benefit adviser. Furthermore, the previous Benefits Adviser worked on different days (Mondays and Thursdays) and Andrea's days were different. But it has been getting busier for Andrea as she has built up a number of regular clients. She has helped them with Council Tax issues, independent personal payments, and debt matters, to name but a few. She is enjoying her work.

We have been lucky to have four volunteers supplemented by two capable social workers to help with the less complex matters, which still meant a great deal to our clients.

Sharifullah Dorani, Immigration and Employment Adviser

Drop-in Enquiries 2021-2022



Case Study Example - Asylum Client

A new client called us in June 2021. He had come to the UK as a student in 2019 and subsequently applied for asylum, along with his family, in February 2021. He had received ARC cards for some of his family but had not received one for one of his children. I was able to help him fill out a form online to enquire about this which he then submitted. He later called me in September to ask for help to get "leave in line" for his newborn daughter (which I was able to help him to do) and he confirmed that he had received the missing ARC card for his child. He was very grateful for our help.

Helena Maddock, Immigration and Employment Adviser

Tuition (April 2021 – September 2021)

Concerned about the isolation of our young asylum seekers and their access to learning facilities, BRASS embarked upon a project to teach English online until such time face to face lessons could resume. As always, our volunteer tutors embraced the challenge and overcame the numerous technical problems to help out. Thank you Gordon, Sabina, Sally and Sidney!

Pat Porter, Admin Assistant

Tuition (September 2021- March 2022)

What a year it has been for the volunteer teaching team at BRASS. Zoom lessons, ongoing befriending/teaching through lockdown from individual ESL teachers (and advisers) who quietly continued the ethos of BRASS, befriending, teaching and enabling refugees.

In October 2021, Cathy Wood and I volunteered to co-ordinate the ESL volunteer teacher programme at BRASS. In November 2021, an online Zoom forum was organised to outline what was happening and to see who could help which led onto regular coffee catch-ups for volunteer teachers as numbers increased.

Thank you to St Peters, De Pary's

Sabina Billing and I had already started to run beginner and Level 2 English lessons for Afghani women on Thursdays at St Peters, De Pary's (which had run pre-lockdown). Numbers grew as word of mouth spread. Huge thanks must go, in particular, to Liz at St Peters whose constant good-humoured support and help meant the inclusion of women eager to learn.

Teaching at Supported Housing

Sabina also introduced me to her voluntary work at Athena housing, Ferntree and St Georges. What we experienced was a growing level of applications from these “safe houses” for teenage refugees including Syrians, Afghanis, Kurdish Iranian, Chad, the Sudan and Ethiopia (to name but a few countries). With Bedford College oversubscribed, some of these young people did not qualify for entry to Bedford College until they were at entry level one. The homes they were in provided support but couldn’t teach them English. Once they were assessed, they were initially taught remotely which led to pleas for laptops and tablets.

Assessment of Students

With the support of another ESOL charity an assessment document was put together so that BRASS could identify what level students were at before they were “matched” with an ESL tutor for 1:1 lessons. This proved invaluable as we recruited highly experienced volunteer teachers including retired head teachers, University Lectures and also, much needed, maths teachers

Charity Collaboration – Bedford Council

As part of our growing ESL team support has come, not just in BRASS, but externally as charities work together. At Bedford Council Lila Begum has worked to co-ordinate the charities through quarterly English Language Partnership meetings with ESOL partners through zoom.

Recruitment of new ESL teachers

During lockdown, the response from volunteers wishing to help grew. As the Volunteer Teacher and Student Co-ordinator online face to face interviews through Zoom and Whatsapp meant we were able to respond to this and recruit highly qualified teachers so that, as BRASS re-opened its doors, we were able to respond to the huge need for ESL teaching.

Thank you

Finally, a huge thank you to all who have supported, befriended and taught through and post lockdown. Office space for classes has become a limiting factor in how many we can teach at this point but there is a vibrant voluntary teaching community. Our popular coffee/tea catch-ups after lessons have enabled the wider sharing of information and support within our voluntary teaching community as well.

Andrea Jones, Volunteer Coordinator and Tutor



Allotment

Hard work continues at the allotment where one of our Syrian clients is helping keep the plot productive. We hope to encourage more of our clients to be involved as the benefits of gardening for mental and physical wellbeing are well established.



Green fingers also helped during Refugee Week when gifts of plants were offered to members of the public, with customised labels offering information about BRASS and Refugee Week.



Objectives and Activities

Vision

A world where refugees and asylum seekers are included, accepted and supported by society.

Mission Statement

BRASS is an established charity working to empower, inform and support refugees and asylum seekers and to protect rights with an aim to develop independence and involvement in UK society.

Strategic Objectives 2019-2022

The trustees have reviewed BRASS' strategic objectives and made some changes. These objectives will form the basis of planning our activities over the next three years. We plan to use these to inform annual targets to ensure we remain focussed on our strategic objectives.

- 1) Sustainable development of BRASS as an organisation to serve the interests and needs of refugees and asylum seekers and their families.
- 2) To enhance the ability of refugees and asylum seekers to understand and navigate UK procedures, processes and systems and promoting change to create a fairer system.
- 3) Provide opportunities for refugees and asylum seekers to increase independence, integration and confidence through learning and social activities.
- 4) Encourage participation of refugees and asylum seekers in the development and management of BRASS.
- 5) To build partnerships with other agencies, to cross refer clients, share information and campaign for the welfare of refugees and asylum seekers locally and nationally.
- 6) To inform and educate the community of Bedford and foster relationships between refugees and asylum seekers and the wider community.

Services

BRASS currently offers three drop-in advice sessions staffed by volunteers and BRASS staff - on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays, 10am-2pm, with fewer sessions conducted via telephone than in the earlier months of the year. These are accredited by the Office of the Immigration Services Commissioner (OISC) to give immigration advice. Through funding by the National Lottery Community Fund and the East of England LGA, BRASS employs a specialist benefits adviser, 2 employment advisers and 2 immigration advisers. We also support the

Refugee Legal Assistance project run by the University of Bedford on its Luton Campus on Tuesday evenings during term time, which specialises in refugee family reunions. The project has, over recent years, supported over 50 families.

Our tutoring programme matches volunteer tutors with refugees and asylum seekers who want to learn or improve their English language skills. This service is offered in the community, at the BRASS offices and online. Our education services had previously expanded and, whilst we provide small group tuition in numeracy and preparing for the Life in the UK test, these sessions had to put on pause until such time as Covid permits.

Our allotment plot continues to be worked by volunteers. Our popular summer outings including summer trips to the seaside were not possible this year, sadly. Whilst BRASS plays a leading role in Refugee Week each year, organising a variety of events to promote refugee issues, this year's events revolved around raising awareness via our market stall with The Higgins, myth-busting leaflets, suggested reading Book Lists and installations at St Paul's Church.

Public Benefit

BRASS provides a range of services to support refugees and asylum seekers in the Bedford community and further afield. Free immigration advice is in short supply in this area and without the service provided by BRASS through phone and appointment advice sessions, many refugees and asylum seekers would be left to tackle the often complex immigration system alone. Advice is also provided on a range of resettlement issues including employment, housing, education and benefits. This advice enables our clients to better integrate into society and to learn to manage their own affairs independently. BRASS also provides a dedicated resettlement worker to support Syrian and Afghan refugees who are resettled in Bedford, supporting them to settle and integrate into our community.

For those who want to improve their English, BRASS' tutoring project matches volunteer tutors with clients. This relationship can often provide improved self-confidence and support with other aspects of integration. We also run classes for those wishing to improve their numeracy and those preparing for the Life in the UK test. The BRASS allotment is now quite well established, providing a sense of community to clients, as well as providing asylum seekers (who are not allowed to work) activities to fill their time as well as fresh produce to take home.

BRASS is working to inform and educate the public on issues around immigration and asylum. Asylum seekers are a stigmatised group and through our work with Refugee Week and our coordinator giving talks to groups in the Bedford area, we are encouraging the public to look differently at refugees and asylum seekers and to see the positive contribution they make to our society.

Achievements and Performance

Progress towards Strategic Objectives 2019-2022

We have measured our progress on our previous strategic objectives as the review took place at the end of the reporting year.

Sustainable development of BRASS as an organisation to serve the interests and needs of refugees and asylum seekers.

BRASS' advice sessions, our core service, was provided mainly by telephone this year but there were face to face meetings with clients (with Covid measures in place) when it was deemed essential. We also continue to provide specialist benefits advice. Through our VPRS resettlement worker, we support families, in conjunction with Bedford Borough Council, who are resettled in Bedford from refugee camps in the Middle East. Our English Language project started the year online but made rapid progress through the year towards the reinstatement of face to face classes with the appointment of two volunteer coordinators.

The BRASS allotment continues to offer a great benefit to clients.

To enhance the ability of refugees and asylum seekers to understand UK procedures, processes and systems.

The UK immigration system can be confusing even for those of us who deal with it on a regular basis, so navigating it can be near impossible for those who are new to the country and may have limited English. Through our OISC registered drop-in immigration advice sessions, BRASS helps refugees and asylum seekers to deal with these complex systems. Advice is also provided around other non-immigration issues such as housing, employment and finance to aid integration. We are able to provide specialist advice through our immigration advisers, employment advisers and benefits adviser. Our popular English Language Tuition also gives refugees and asylum seekers the skills to better navigate British systems and our new classes in numeracy and preparing for the Life in the UK test also aid integration though these were dramatically reduced this year.

Increasing independence and confidence through learning and social activities.

Our tuition project provides one-to-one/group tuition to those who wish to improve their English, numeracy and preparing for the Life in the UK test. It is hoped that this will enable them to become more independent and better able to integrate into society. Our allotment provides a place for our clients to relax, meet new people and grow their own food.

To raise awareness in wider society of issues faced by refugees and asylum seekers.

BRASS is always heavily involved with activities in Bedford celebrating Refugee Week. Myth-busting leaflets are given out to members of the public and events are held at various venues around the town including a very popular football tournament and fun day in one of Bedford's public parks though, this year, the football tournament and fun day were not able to go ahead. BRASS' coordinator gives talks to local groups and the feedback forms completed at the end of these talks indicate that perceptions of refugees and asylum seekers have been changed by what they have heard. We regularly publish positive stories about our clients and information about refugees and the asylum system on our website and Facebook page.

Encourage participation of refugees and asylum seekers in the development and management of BRASS.

BRASS continually encourages clients and former clients to become involved in BRASS, whether through attending groups and activities, becoming a volunteer or joining the committee. A former client is now on our committee and some of our volunteers have previously used our services. We have also provided social work placements to a number of students, some of whom are from a refugee background.

To build partnerships with other agencies, to cross refer clients, share information and campaign on behalf of the wellbeing of refugees and asylum seekers locally and nationally.

BRASS works with other agencies in a variety of ways. BRASS works with many local charities and networks. Our coordinator is involved with The New Migration Partnership, Bedford Borough Diversity Network and the Bedford Advice forum – local multi-agency forums where issues are raised, information exchanged and partnership solutions explored. BRASS is a key participant in the organisation of the annual Bedford Refugee Week which holds events to raise awareness of the issues facing refugees and asylum seekers.

Referrals are received from Children's Services which is responsible for unaccompanied Asylum seekers under the age of 18. The Community Voluntary Service (CVS) provides a regular supply of enthusiastic and committed volunteers and the Charity continues to receive invaluable support from the Bedford Borough.

BRASS has been very involved with Refugee Week in Bedford for many years though this year the event was much smaller. The aim of Refugee Week is to raise awareness of the issues faced by refugees and asylum seekers and the positive contributions they make to British society. Covid has had a serious effect upon the level of engagement with the local community in terms of giving talks to various groups in the Bedford area to change perceptions of these issues and gathering feedback from those who attend to assess changing attitudes.

Fundraising activities

We would like to thank the following organisations from whom we have received grants over the past year:

The National Lottery Community Fund	Harpur Trust
Bedford Borough Council	The 29th of May Charitable Trust
The Beds and Luton Community Foundation	Wixamtree Trust
Allen Lane Foundation	Steel Charitable Trust
Beatrice Laing Trust	Gale family Trust
Panacea Charitable Trust	East of England LGA

We would also like to thank all of the individual donors who support BRASS through one off and regular donations.

BRASS would like to thank our fundraiser Karen Mayoh for her continued hard work and support.

Future Plans and the challenges ahead

Our services have been steadily resuming this year as we come out of Covid into the 'new normal'.

We are now coming towards the end of our extended 5 year grant from the National Lottery Community Fund. Whilst this means an end to the regular income we have been receiving, it also provides an opportunity for us to apply for a new National Lottery Community Fund grant to support BRASS to develop our services. Therefore, a significant priority for the staff and trustees over the coming year will be to produce the end of grant evaluation to evidence the great work BRASS has done with this funding, along with planning for what we hope will come next.

BRASS will continue to prioritise the needs of our clients by providing good quality, reliable services. In order to safeguard BRASS and ensure that our vital services continue to be available, we will work to ensure good governance to maintain stability. BRASS is fortunate to be in a secure financial position, with more than 6 months of reserves. There are bound to be other challenges ahead, but we are confident that BRASS is well placed to face them.

Getting involved with BRASS

Volunteers are often needed for our drop-in, English tutoring and the allotment.

If you are interested in becoming involved with BRASS as a volunteer, please contact Co-ordinator Brian Cunningham on 01234 211381 or brian@brass27b.org. For further information on any of our work, please check our website www.brassbedford.org.uk and Facebook pages www.facebook.com/brassbedford and www.facebook.com/brassallotment.

Charity Registration Number: 1096874

BEDFORDSHIRE REFUGEE AND ASYLUM SEEKER SUPPORT GROUP (BRASS)

TRUSTEES REPORT AND ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2022

**CONTENTS OF THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2022**

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LEGAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION

CHARITY NAME: Bedfordshire Refugee and Asylum Seeker Support Group

OTHER NAME CHARITY IS KNOWN BY: BRASS

REGISTERED CHARITY NUMBER: 1096874

CHARITY'S PRINCIPAL ADDRESS:
27B Tavistock Street
Bedford
MK40 2RB

NAMES OF THE CHARITY TRUSTEES WHO MANAGE THE CHARITY

Victoria Hilliard
Cathy Moorhouse
Morris Johns - Chair from 3rd July 2020
Sanja Radic
James Biggs
Mags Brady
John Lehal - Resigned 31st March 2022

PROJECT CO-ORDINATOR
Brian Cunningham

BANKERS

RBS
Bedford Branch
15-19 Mill Street
Bedford
MK40 3EU

Switched the main current account in May 2021 to:-
The Co-operative Bank
Delf House
Skelmersdale
WN8 6WT

REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES

REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2022

The Trustees of the charity present their report together with the financial statements for the year ended 31 March 2022, prepared in accordance with the Charities Act 2011 and the Accounting and Reporting by Charities Statement of Recommended Practice (SORP 2005).

From April 2021 to March 2022 finance meetings and Trustee meetings were held quarterly, attended by the Chair, Committee members and staff.

BRASS employs a Project Co-ordinator to oversee day to day business and to provide specialist advice, and full-time Syrian Family Support Officer and part-time Benefits Advisor, Integration Officer, Immigration Advisor, Finance Manager and Finance Officer. Much of the charity's work is undertaken by a team of dedicated volunteers.

OBJECTIVES AND REVIEW OF ACTIVITIES

The charity is an established non-political, voluntary organisation working to empower, inform and support refugees and asylum seekers and their families, protect their rights and enable them to develop their independence and involvement in UK society. Specifically the charity was established for the benefit of refugees and asylum seekers in the County of Bedfordshire to assist in the relief of poverty, hardship or distress. Services are delivered from a local government owned property in Bedford town centre which is leased by BRASS. Much work this year was done by phone and virtually from our offices and by staff from home due to Covid.

BRASS continues to have strong working relationships with local organisations providing advice so that individuals can get support from the organisations best placed to offer it. Luton Law Centre and Luton law firms have qualified solicitors and case workers who take referrals from BRASS and provide telephone support to BRASS advisors. BRASS also works with the University of Bedfordshire Law Department to assist refugees with family reunification applications. BRASS works with the Citizens Advice Bureau to cross refer clients and makes referrals to the local MP who, in specific cases, helps with representations to the Home Office.

Referrals are received from Children's Services which is responsible for unaccompanied asylum seekers under the age of 18. The Community Voluntary Service (CVS) provides a regular supply of enthusiastic and committed volunteers and the Charity continues to receive invaluable support from the Bedford Borough Council and Bedfordshire Rural Communities Charity who support our tutoring project by carrying out the relevant DBS checks.

BRASS works in partnership with both local and national charities. Advice and support are provided by the Refugee Council, which is the largest refugee agency in the UK, and Migrant Help. We are also a registered referrer for Bedford Food Bank.

REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES CONT'D...

BRASS seeks to support the local voluntary sector and work towards financial self-sustainability. It leases its offices in Bedford town centre but is able to sub-let office and drop-in space to other local charities at affordable rates.

BRASS is focused on working in partnership with other organisations to share knowledge and skills, prevent duplication, maximise effectiveness, cut costs and share facilities. On behalf of the Trustees of BRASS I can confirm that in carrying out our financial review we have considered and complied with our duty to have due regard to the Charity Commission's guidance on public benefit.

ACHIEVEMENTS AND PERFORMANCE

During the last financial year BRASS has supported over 350 clients. We seek to support our client group's changing needs; the changes to the benefits system and ever increasing complexity of immigration applications has increased demands for our services. BRASS now receives funding from the Big Lottery and will provide specialist advice through a Complex Caseworker for immigration matters and a Benefits Advisor. We will be able to provide additional social activities through our Integration Officer who will also be part funded by the Big Lottery.

We continue attending to our advice sessions twice a week. However, due to Covid these are now done by phone. We therefore have dealt with fewer client matters this year. We also offer appointments with our Benefits Adviser worker, Syrian Support and our Immigration Adviser where we feel the need is urgent or can only be addressed in person.

Our social activities this year have been greatly curtailed by Covid. We have done some activities online for Refugee Week. Our co-ordinator is still the chair of the Refugee Week steering group, and we have done some virtual one to one tutoring which we are further developing. BRASS' allotment is still up and running with both refugees and volunteers attending.

REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES CONT'D...

FINANCIAL REVIEW

As in previous years, BRASS is very fortunate to have received funding from various different sources this year.

The BIG Lottery continues to fund our Co-ordinator, along with other posts and other running costs for five years.

The Harpur Trust continues its support by helping to fund our Finance Manager and Finance Officer salary costs and volunteer costs. Bedford Borough Council provided continued funding support towards staff costs, and BRASS has been able to utilise funding from the Government Transition Fund to support the introduction of the Universal Credit Scheme. Money has been used to fund a part-time Benefits Adviser.

We thank Wixamtree Trust for their continued ongoing support for funding. Also we would like to thank The Steel Trust, Gale Trust, 29th May 1961 charitable Trust and Margaret Brereton for providing unrestricted funding.

Total Incoming Resources during the financial year were £122,132, a significant drop on the previous year. This has been used to provide funding to cover all our existing posts which are all filled and other direct costs and overheads. A large part of the reason for the drop in income is that the lottery funding came to an end. We were not able to put in a new bid as the lottery were only taking Covid related bids at the time. They were good enough to give us a six month extension, but this was not enough to cover the gap until our new bid could be granted and left us with a shortfall. We are delighted to say that the lottery has now granted us new funding starting at the beginning of the new financial year and that this funding is for five years which means we will be free from having to put together a new lottery bid for 5 years. Now that we have successfully secured this funding we now have more time to concentrate on putting in other bids. We are asking for funding over more than one year as we have done in the past. We are awaiting outcome of some of these new bids and are planning others early in the new financial year.

Costs increased this year by approximately 7.5% to £170,703 mainly due to an increase in weekly hours for some staff. The increase in staff hours was mainly to support the growing needs of the increasing number of refugees coming into the country.

FINANCIAL REVIEW RESERVES POLICY.

BRASS reserves as 31st March 2022, were £ 117,601 as at 31 March 2022. Of these funds £52,490 were restricted funds, the remaining £ 65,111 were unrestricted funds. The Trustee Board have established a policy whereby it aims to maintain sufficient unrestricted funds not invested in tangible fixed assets and not required to meet future budgeted expenditure, being the "free reserves", to be sufficient to support the future growth of the charity and provide sufficient reserves for dealing with possible contingencies such as short-term cessation of project activity or redundancy.

Approved by the Trustees and signed on their behalf by:



Morris Johns

Chair

Date: 8th September 2022

INDEPENDENT EXAMINER'S REPORT TO THE TRUSTEES OF BEDFORDSHIRE REFUGEE AND ASYLUM SEEKER SUPPORT GROUP

I report on the financial statements of the charity for the year ended 31 March 2022 as set out on pages 7 to 13.

This report is made solely to the charity's trustees, as a body, in accordance with section 145 of the Charities Act 2011 ('the 2011 Act'). My work has been undertaken so that I might state to the charity's trustees those matters I am required to state to them in this report and for no other purpose. To the fullest extent permitted by law, I do not accept or assume responsibility to anyone other than the charity and the charity's trustees as a body, for my work, for this report, or for the opinions I have formed.

Respective responsibilities of trustees and examiner

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

It is my responsibility to:

- * examine the financial statements under section 145 of the 2011 Act;
- * to follow the procedures laid down in the General Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the 2011 Act; and
- * 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 financial statements presented with those records. It also includes consideration of any unusual items or disclosures in the financial statements 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 financial statements present a 'true and fair view' and the report is limited to those matters set out in the statement below.

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 financial statements which accord with the accounting records and comply with the accounting 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 financial statements to be reached.



John Esam
Mayfield Lodge
1 Main Road,
Biddenham
MK40 4BB

Dated: 8th September 2022

Statement of Financial Activities as at 31st March 2022

Incoming Resources	Note	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	Total 2022 £	Total 2021 £
Grants receivable	3	15,000	50,170	65,170	70,561
Donations and other fund raising activities		13,346	38,918	52,264	90,274
Rental income		0	0	0	0
Investment income		43	0	43	78
Other income		4,655	0	4,655	159
Total Incoming Resources		33,044	89,088	122,132	161,072
Resources Expended					
Costs of generating Funds					
Costs of generating funds		7,479	2,721	10,200	8,850
Charitable activities	4	9,052	150,917	159,969	147,853
Governance costs		0	534	534	2,055
Total Resources Expended		16,531	154,172	170,703	158,758
Net Incoming/ (Outgoing) Resources		16,513	(65,084)	(48,571)	2,314
Funds brought forward		71,759	94,413	166,172	163,858
Transfers between funds		(23,161)	23,161	0	0
Funds carried forward		65,111	52,490	117,601	166,172

All of the charity's activities derive from continuing operations during the above two periods

Balance Sheet at 31 March 2022

	Note	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	Total 2022 £	Total 2021 £
Fixed assets					
Tangible assets	5	259	2,007	2,266	2,858
Current Assets					
Debtors and Prepayments	6	0	9,827	9,827	28,743
Cash and Bank in hand		64,852	49,309	114,161	160,429
Total Current Assets		64,852	59,136	123,988	189,172
Creditors Amounts falling due within one year	7	0	8,653	8,653	25,858
Net Current Assets		64,852	50,483	115,335	163,314
Net Assets		65,111	52,490	117,601	166,172
Funds of the Charity					
Unrestricted funds	10	63,617	0	63,617	54,915
Restricted funds	10	0	50,483	50,483	106,996
Unrestricted & Restricted capital reserve		259	2,007	2,266	2858
Designated funds		1,235	0	1,235	1,403
Total funds		65,111	52,490	117,601	166,172

Trustees' responsibilities

The trustees acknowledge their responsibility for complying with the requirements of the Charities Commission and confirm that the accounts have been prepared in accordance with Accounting and Reporting by Charities (SORP 2005) and Charities Act 2011.

Approved by the trustees and signed on their behalf by:


.....

Name Morris Johns, Dated 8th September 2022

Notes to the Financial Statements for the Year Ended 31 March 2022

1. Accounting Policies

Statement of compliance

The financial statements have been prepared on the basis of historic cost and in accordance with the applicable United Kingdom Reporting Standards, the Charities Act 2011 and the Accounting and Reporting by Charities Statement of Recommended Practice (SORP 2005).

Basis of Preparation

As permitted by SORP 2005 the trustees have adapted the heading used to describe Incoming Resources and Resources Expended within the Statement of Financial Activities when presenting the results for the year.

Incoming Resources

Incoming resources are recognised when received or receivable by the charity. Income is derived from fund raising activities, donations and the sub-letting of rented property. Grants are recognised on receipt or award unless, in the judgement of the trustees, conditions attached to the grant make it improbable that they will be received.

Restricted Funds

Restricted funds are to be used for a specific purpose as laid down by the donor. Expenditure which meets these criteria is identified against the fund.

Unrestricted Funds

Unrestricted funds are incoming resources received or receivable generated for charitable purposes and available for use at the discretion of the trustees in furtherance of the general objectives of the charity and have not been designated for other purposes.

Paid Employees

The charity employs a Project Co-ordinator, part-time Facilities (Support) Officer and part-time Benefits Advisor and a Syrian Family Support Worker. These four posts are funded through restricted grants.

Trustee Expenses

There were no payments or reimbursements made to any trustees during the financial year.

Fixed Assets

Assets with a useful life of more than two years are capitalised at cost and depreciated over their useful life.

Depreciation on computer equipment is charged at 33% on a straight line basis.

Depreciation on furniture and other equipment is charged at 25% on a straight line basis.

Fixed Assets funded by capital grants are capitalised and a restricted capital reserve created. The reserve is reduced by the depreciation charge.

Notes to the Financial Statements for the Year Ended 31 March 2022

2. Property & Operating Leases

i) Operating Lease Commitments - Nil.

ii) The annual commitment for the land and buildings lease amounts to £9,375 where the term remaining is between one and five years. There are no further lease commitments.

Due to the pandemic, the authority reduced the rent charge, but there will be increases for future rent charges.

Rent under property lease amounted to £9,875 in 2020-21.

3. Income from Grants, Donations and Legacies:

	Unrestricted Funds	Restricted Funds	Total 2022	Total 2021
	£	£	£	£
Donations from other charities, companies	13,346	38,918	52,264	70,561
Donations from trusts, individuals and similar	15,000	50,170	65,170	90,274
Total grants received	28,346	89,088	117,434	160,835

4. Resources Expended

Costs of generating Funds

under charitable activities were:

	Unrestricted Funds	Restricted Funds	Total 2022	Total 2021
	£	£	£	£
Staff payroll costs	(694)	135,691	134,997	121,436
Volunteer expenses & training	353	0	353	0
Staff travel & training	0	2,777	2,777	1,254
Social worker	800	0	800	1,140
Rent ,Rates & Insurance (Note)	6,950	4,566	11,516	9,395
IT, Telephone & Internet	0	4,772	4,772	3,846
Utilities, cleaning & maintenance.	1,478	743	2,221	8,792
Stationery, printing & postage	0	903	903	1,105
Publications & subscriptions	0	243	243	73
Web & promotional costs	0	95	95	462
Client outings & welfare costs	167	2	169	90
Depreciation	183	1,127	1,310	901
Governance Costs	0	534	534	0
Other expenses	7,294	2,719	10,013	10,264
Total	16,531	154,172	170,703	158,758

Notes to the Financial Statements for the Year Ended 31 March 2022

5. Fixed Assets	Furniture & Equipment
Cost	£
At 1 April 2021	14,153
Additions	718
At 31 March 2022	<u>14,871</u>
 Depreciation	
At 1 April 2021	11,295
Charge for year	1,310
At 31 March 2022	<u>12,605</u>
 Net Book Value	
At 31 March 2021	<u>2,858</u>
At 31 March 2022	<u><u>2,266</u></u>

6. Debtors and prepayments due within one year	2022	2021
	£	£
Debtors	0	0
Prepayments and accrued income	9,827	28,743
Total Debtors	<u>9,827</u>	<u>28,743</u>

7. Creditors and accruals due within one year	2022	2021
	£	£
Creditors	30	30
Deferred income	0	15,000
Accruals	8,623	10,828
Total creditors	<u>8,653</u>	<u>25,858</u>

8. Staff Costs	2022	2021
	£	£
Gross wages	126,180	114,680
Employers National Insurance costs	7,921	6,562
Employers National Insurance rebate	(4,000)	(4,000)
Pension costs	4,896	4,194
	<u>134,997</u>	<u>121,436</u>

During the year BRASS employed an average of nine employees; one full-time employee and six part-time employees. No employee earned more than £60,000.

Notes to the Financial Statements for the Year Ended 31 March 2022

9. Restricted Income Funds as at March 31 2022

Fund Name	Purpose and restriction
Big Lottery (i)	Project Co-ordinator salary, part-time Benefits Adviser, Complex Caseworker & Integration Worker salaries, with on costs, general running costs and some overhead costs.
Harpur Trust (ii)	Part-time Finance Manager & Finance Assistant, on costs and general running costs
Harpur Trust (iii)	Administrator costs
Employment Support restricted Grants (iv)	Restricted Reserves
Bedford Borough Council Syrian Worker (v)	Caseworker, management, IT equipment, telephone, travel and overhead costs.

10. Movement of Major Funds

Fund Names	Balance at 1st April 2021 £	Incoming resources £	Outgoing resources £	Transfers £	Balance at 31st March 2022 £
Other	71,759	33,044	(16,531)	(23,161)	65,111
Unrestricted Funds	71,759	33,044	(16,531)	(23,161)	65,111
Employment Support(iv)	7,559	33,919	(20,894)	0	20,584
Bedford Borough Council Syrian Worker (v)	15,089	49,452	(44,896)	0	19,645
Bedford & Luton Community Fund	5,000	0	0	0	5,000
Beds Charitable Trust	0	5,000	0	0	5,000
Big Lottery (i)	37,205	0	(56,165)	19,011	51
Allen Lane	5,000	0	(5,000)	0	0
Harpur Trust (ii)	16,639	0	(16,446)	0	193
Harpur Trust (iii)	3,158	0	(9,644)	6,495	9
Small restricted grants	2,346	0	0	(2,346)	0
	91,996	88,371	(153,045)	23,161	50,483
Restricted capital reserve	2,417	717	(1,127)	0	2,007
Restricted Funds	94,413	89,088	(154,172)	23,161	52,490
Total Funds	166,172	122,132	(170,703)	0	117,601

- (i) The final award of the five year funding from Big Lottery Grant of £300,000 was received and utilised in the previous year (2020-2021). An overlap of £33,500 paid to bridge the gap was carried forward to fund the current year's (2021-22), salaries. The funding has been allocated to salary and on-costs of the Project Co-ordinator, Benefits Adviser, Complex Caseworker and Integration Worker with on costs, general running costs and overhead costs.
- (ii) A two year grant was awarded by Harpur Trust to support part-time Finance Manager and part-time Finance Assistant posts, continuing until September 2022.
- (iii) A two year grant was awarded by Harpur Trust to support the part-time Administrator which has now concluded, (2021-22).
- (iv) The second year's award for Employment support worker hours was received.
- (v) A further grant of £15,000 was awarded by the Borough to fund the Syrian Worker Assistant post as well as the £35,170 funding the main Syrian Worker post. Part of the award was used to fund a laptop for the assistant post.

Accounts



Annual Report

2021

(April 2020 – March 2021)

'A world where refugees and asylum seekers
are included, accepted and supported by
society'

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Reference and administrative details

Charity name	Bedfordshire Refugee and Asylum Seeker Support (BRASS)
Registered Charity Number	1096874
OISC Number	N200100432
Office address	27b Tavistock Street Bedford, MK40 2RB

Staff

Brian Cunningham, Coordinator
Heather Jones, Integration Officer (retired January 2021)
Nadia Laribi, Syrian Resettlement Worker (left October 2020)
Wafia Ahmed, Syrian Resettlement Worker (started November 2020)
Jon Howton, Benefits Adviser (until October 2020) and Finance Officer
Lara McCormack, Benefits Adviser (started October 2020)
Rani Sheemar, Finance Manager
Pat Porter, Admin Assistant
Sharifullah Dorani, Immigration & Employment Adviser
Helena Maddock, Immigration & Employment Adviser

Current & Recent Volunteers

Abeer Ahmed	Irina Foster
Aisha Gooding	John Blakey
Andrea Jones	John Osman
Anita Hamrouni	Krystal Heath
Anita Hanwell	Michelle Thomas
Annie Doise	Mahmoud El Sayed
Ash Ali	Mona Sulieman
Babs Vine-Blakey	Nabil Chabaan
Baraah Atef Abdula	Nacera
Bekkie Hart	Nadia Gasmi
Benedict Heal	Nicola Harbour
Bob Edwards	Nicola Lindsay
Caroline Forni	Pam Hider
Catherine Veitch	Patricia Porter
Cathy Wood	Peter Jones
Chris Hilliard	Rachel Goodge
Claudia Zugno	Rainy Blair
David Porter	Sabina Billing
David Thomas	Sally Hilliard
David Whittome	Sally Monkman
Doha Alneser	Sharifullah Dorani
Doreen Richardson	Shubham Kalyan
Elena Gualco	Sidney Miller
Elizabeth Ridley	Silvia Borelli
Gary Sutcliffe	Sue Horn
Gordon James	Sumana Carlton-Smith
Helena Maddock	Sylvia MacDowell

Trustees

Morris Johns (Chair)

Victoria Hilliard (Vice Chair)

Cathy Moorhouse

John Lehal (Treasurer)

Sanja Radic (Secretary)

James Biggs

Structure, Governance and Management

Governing Document

BRASS is a registered charity governed by a constitution that was adopted on 1st October 1999 and then revised on 18th September 2002 and 5th March 2003. BRASS is a non-political, voluntary organisation, established for the benefit of refugees and asylum seekers in the County of Bedfordshire to assist in the relief of poverty, hardship or distress.

Organisational Structure

BRASS employs 2 full-time members of staff; a Project Co-ordinator overseeing day to day business and a Resettlement worker supporting Syrian Refugees who have been resettled in Bedford as part of the government's resettlement programme. We also employ a number of part time staff; an Integration Officer, a Benefits Adviser, 2 Immigration Advisers, 2 Employment Advisers, a Finance Manager and Officer and Administrative staff. Staff are supported by a team of dedicated volunteers, making our services excellent value for money. Services are delivered from a town centre, local government owned property leased by BRASS. A board of skilled and experienced trustees drawn from the local community oversee and govern services.

Recruitment and Appointment of Trustees

BRASS recognises that the recruitment and selection of new trustees can strongly influence our future effectiveness. The organisation aims to follow good practice in this field as well as the provisions of our constitution. All BRASS trustees are elected at the Annual General Meeting or are co-opted. When looking to recruit new trustees, the committee will attempt to fill any gaps in skills, knowledge and experience of our current trustees and reflect the diversity of the communities in which we operate. We will use the most appropriate ways of recruiting new trustees, including local networks and advertising. We will prepare role descriptions for trustees, ensure that all potential trustees meet all eligibility criteria and ask all potential trustees about any possible conflicts of interest.

All trustees will be invited to complete a nomination/co-option form so that their nomination can be presented at the Annual General Meeting or the next Executive Committee. They will then be invited to meet with the chairperson to discuss their nomination and this discussion will be recorded on their nomination paper and then, once accepted, their name and details will be given to the Charities Commission.

Relationships with other organisations

BRASS believes that by building capacity through partnership working we can facilitate sustainability of service provision. The work of BRASS complements other services through the co-ordinator's involvement with The Equalities and New Migration Partnership and the Bedfordshire Advice Forum – local multi-agency forums where issues are raised, information exchanged and partnership

solutions explored. BRASS is a key participant in the organisation of the annual Bedford Refugee Week which holds events to raise awareness of the issues facing refugees and asylum seekers.

BRASS has strong working relationships with local organisations so that individuals can get support from the organisation best placed to provide it. Luton Law Centre has qualified solicitors and case workers who take referrals from BRASS and provide telephone support to BRASS advisers. There is cross referral of clients between BRASS and the Citizen's Advice Bureau and the Polish British Integration Centre. BRASS makes referrals to the local MP Mohammad Yasin who helps with representations to the Home Office for specific cases. Referrals are received from the Social Care Team, which is responsible for unaccompanied under 18 asylum seekers, for both advice at the drop-in and English tuition. Community Voluntary Service (CVS) provides a regular supply of enthusiastic and committed volunteers and Bedford Borough Council supports BRASS and contributes to Refugee Week. Bedfordshire Rural Communities Charity supports our tutoring project by carrying out the relevant DBS checks.

BRASS works in partnership with both local and national charities. Advice and support are provided by the Refugee Council, which is the largest refugee agency in the UK. BRASS has an arrangement with the Red Cross whereby they provide BRASS with vouchers which can be given to needy clients to spend on clothes at Red Cross shops and help with travel expenses to the nearest immigration solicitors in Luton.

Supporting the local voluntary sector and working towards some financial self-sustainability has become an important part of the organisational ethic.

Risk management

The main risk this year has been Covid. We therefore switched to phone advice with face to face meetings only when absolutely necessary and with Covid measures in place including plastic screens, face masks, sanitisers, social distancing and good ventilation. We have had to much reduce our social activities but have sought to replace them with virtual activities wherever possible.

We ensure that our health and safety policy, fire risk assessment and fire safety management plan are regularly reviewed and updated. The building and our services are appropriately insured to safeguard the organisation and volunteers with the tutoring project are subject to DBS checks in order to protect our clients. Our drop-in advice service is regulated by the Office of the Immigration Services Commission (OISC) and we are regularly audited.

As with other small charities, BRASS is affected by external factors, particularly in terms of the economy and legal changes affecting asylum seekers and refugees. The economic situation nationally continues to affect fundraising and BRASS is coming to the end of an extended 5 year grant from the National Lottery Community Fund which has provided a significant level of security to the charity and we are now beginning the process in applying for another grant. BRASS continues to seek and secure other grants which allow us to maintain and

expand our services. BRASS has had 2 members of staff successfully qualify for OISC level 1. They are supervised by a member of staff qualified to level 2. In addition, it is important for BRASS that we are able to provide volunteers with training and progression in return for their commitment. BRASS is also affected by media coverage of refugees and asylum seekers. This can result in increased interest in helping our clients, but it can also have a negative impact when prejudice against refugees and asylum seekers increases.

Internally, BRASS has a group of committed trustees with skills and experience that can help with the development of the organisation. We have now recruited a treasurer which was a gap in the committee. The National Lottery Community Fund grant provides longer term stability for our staff and the ability to expand the number of staff we employ and therefore the capacity to expand our services. Our success in fundraising also presents some challenges as many trusts will only fund an organisation for a limited time, which means we have to be increasingly proactive in seeking funders. We are fortunate to have a good number of committed volunteers, enabling us to provide reliable and high-quality services beyond our drop-in advice service.

The organisation has a policy to hold financial reserves of six months, a level which we have now achieved and exceeded.

Chair's Report



The year has proved to be very strange and abnormal. The Covid-19 crisis meant that, in line with other charities, most of the activities of BRASS were affected. We tried to compensate by using alternative strategies wherever possible, and ensuring that our clients were aware of the available help.

Our staff have been wonderful and buckled down to cope with the new realities. Sadly, all the fun events like trips to sea in Hunstanton, and the Christmas party, had to be cancelled. Of course we are hoping that Covid related problems will be contained if not completely overcome, and that life will be back to normal soon.

Nevertheless, BRASS has met most of its objectives through alternative routes. We are determined, more than ever, to make Bedford a place where people from all over the world can live together in harmony.

We appreciate all our funders and people who have supported us, our dedicated volunteers, trustees and most of all our staff.

We are particularly proud of working in co-operation with other organizations in Bedford, like Bedford Borough Council, to make the lives of our clients more comfortable and secure.

I would also like to acknowledge the part played by my illustrious predecessor Veta Hudson-Rae who touched the hearts of so many people and continued to advance the interests of many vulnerable and marginalised communities. She was a star, arriving in Bedford in a different era in 1950s, making Bedford her home, and devoting her life to improving the lives of all Bedfordians. She will be sorely missed by BRASS as well as many other organisations in the town.

Co-ordinator's Report

It has been a very different year for BRASS this year with Covid nationally and with the surge in numbers in Bedford and then the new variant. So thinking of our staff and clients, we have played it carefully and kept our offices mostly closed and giving advice by phone, with different days for different types of help, answered by different appropriate staff, with clients being seen in person where it was felt necessary.



Our offices having been equipped to reduce the Covid risk. But mostly our staff have been working from home where possible and gradually, as Covid has gone on, we have equipped our staff with laptop computers and work phones to allow them to help our clients with minimum risk to both staff and clients.

There have been some staff changes. Heather our Integration officer has retired, as has our Syrian Support worker Nadia. Jon has gone down to one day a week. We have been joined by Wafia as our Refugee Family Support Officer and Lara as our Benefits Adviser. We have also joined a new East of England project, enabling us to give Helena and Sharif extra days as Employment Advisers.

Our social activities were mostly put on hold this year, so sadly no usual and very popular coach trips to Hunstanton or cultural coach trips of the previous year. And sadly, no Christmas party which had also proved increasingly popular in previous years. There was no Women's Knit and Natter group this year. But we did take care to stay in touch with our clients and offer online befriending.

We provided some online activities for Refugee Week including a virtual refugee-related quiz. We put out a series of seven recipes for home breadmaking, which was proving popular at the time, with recipes from seven countries from where many of our clients originally came. We also put out refugee relevant booklists for both adults and children.

Our one to one tutoring and small classes also came to a halt initially but we have been gradually building up tutoring virtually and assisting our tutors and clients to do this.

Our Syrian refugee project had new families mostly put on hold due to travelling restrictions, with fewer arriving this year. But we are now up to 21 families. We hear this national project may be expanded to refugees from other countries in the future.

Our Refugee Family Reunion Project continued in partnership with the Legal Department of the University of Bedford with clients coming in under Covid rules and but also virtually which was sometimes better for clients who, in the past, have had to travel long distances to come and see us. This is a positive development we may continue with in the future.

Service Updates

Drop-in Report

We have had a marked decrease in drop-in figures as throughout this year as our drop-in has been closed. At the beginning of lockdown we switched to telephone advice. There was then a significant drop in numbers of enquires.

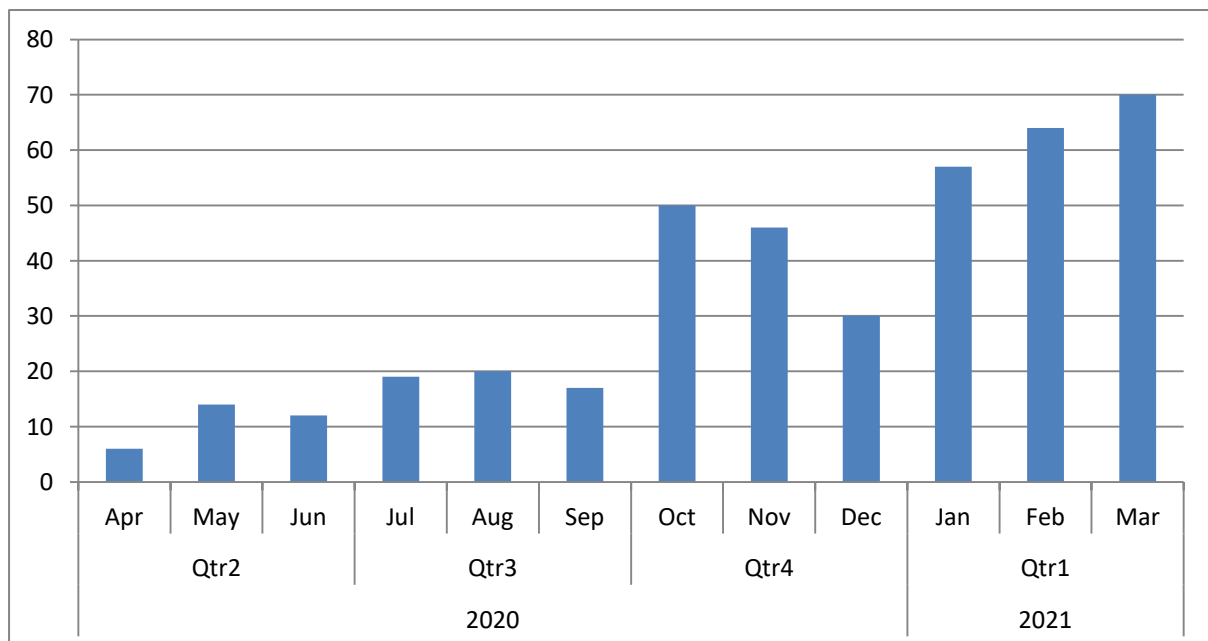
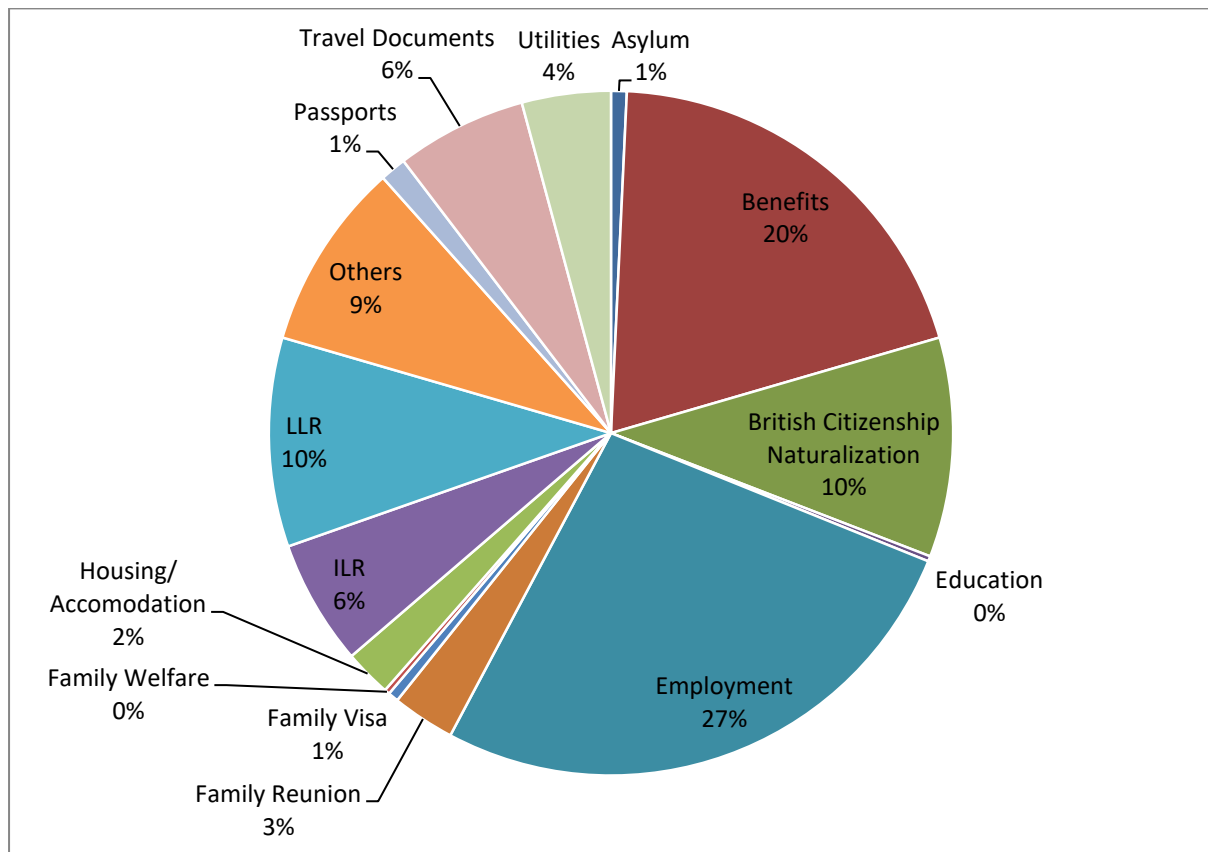
Whereas during drop-in, clients would come to the office with more than one enquiry, at the early stages of lock down they tended to ask only about one urgent problem rather than talk through their problems generally. At first we did not have access to the office and the database, we gradually managed to supply our staff with home laptops that meant that they could later on access our database though, across the year, the figures were reduced as mentioned above.

The Home Office put a hold on all immigration matters they were dealing with which also greatly reduced our immigration enquires for a considerable part of the year.

We started to see clients in the office towards the end of the year, but with the growing numbers of cases in Bedford and the rapid spread of the new variant we limited this to clients who definitely needed face to face meetings in order to protect our clients and staff.

As we became better at recording cases through use of laptops and received more questions on immigration matters as the Home Office started proceedings again with us seeing some clients face to face, the numbers did increase towards the end of the year and we think will continue to do!

Drop-in enquiries 2020-2021



Case Studies - Immigration

'We have been supporting a client since 2014. In early 2020 she came for help with applying for naturalisation. She said she had passed the necessary tests but could not afford to pay for the biometric appointment as well as the visa. She agreed to contact us when she had saved up enough money. It then became apparent that she had not actually passed the English test requirement so I provided advice on how to do that. She called in the summer of 2020 but we were not seeing any clients in person at that point and she was happy to wait to apply until we were able to do so. In January 2021 it was agreed that we could process these applications over the phone so I called her and started the process. She was able to submit her application at the end of the month and was extremely grateful for our help.'

'The Home Office refused Mr O's application for naturalisation. We helped him re-apply to the Home Office, and after about three months, he received a letter from the Home Office notifying him that his application was successful. He was very thankful to BRASS, saying that the hard work we put into preparing his application paid off, or he might have been again refused.'

Case Studies - Employment

'I have received thank you messages from dozens of our clients, especially from our Afghan Community, for BRASS's English and other online courses that we provide as part of our Employment Scheme. Those courses have enabled clients to stay safe (from Covid-19) in the comfort of their home and join the online courses. They were also able to study vocational/practical courses, such as Childcare, Driving Theory, Computing, etc.

For one student who had limited English, one-on-one classes were given. Mr H was pleased, and his teacher confirmed that she would kindly restart the classes with Mr H.'

VPRS (Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme)

'When I started this job as a volunteer I really enjoyed helping refugees as I am one of them and I know how it feels when someone moves from a country where they were born and raised to a country where everything is different especially with a complete different language. I was passionate about doing this as a full time job so I can help and support as many families who need help as I can.

In this year I helped so many people including children and adults with schools, College, work, GP's and helped them to settle more in the country.

One of the cases that I worked on which was difficult was a family who was getting threats from neighbours. The community safety team and the police got involved as this was a single mum with two kids and the mum was getting worried if anyone will hurt her kids on the way to and from school. I liaised with the police to keep her safe and found few temporarily solutions like putting CCTV on the corner of the street, put her phone number marked on the police help line in case if she called and she couldn't talk they will send help straight away, but the biggest help that we all worked and liaised on is to move the family to Peterborough near a family member who lives there so they would feel safer around more relatives. I helped with the arrangements of the removals and the preparations of the house in Peterborough. Also liaised with schools there and made sure that place offered for the 2 children and followed up with schools to make sure the children are settled in schools and everything is fine. I have arranged for support workers to help the family there too and to register with a GP's etc there.

Another case that I worked on that was a bit difficult, one of the children wasn't offered a place in a preferable school and the family weren't happy about it. I had to contact the admissions but again they said there is no places in that preferred school to be offered so the family refused the admissions decision and was complaining about it. I decided to challenge this decision so I took this case to court and I did win the hearing, the kid at the end was offered a place in the school that she wanted to join.

Also another case where a family were living in an upper flat and there is a nightclub under this flat with a main door for the flat near the main door of the nightclub so people who will be going to the nightclub would ring the bell or knock on the families door thinking it's the clubs door. Living there was so inconvenient and not acceptable for kids under 10 years to be around drunk people who is shouting and saying bad words all the time. Also not safe to walk through the main door to go to the flat so I contacted the council and reported this after an incident happened with the family when police broke into the property thinking it's the clubs door when they were looking for drug dealers. After long discussions with the rehousing team with the Bedford Borough council

we managed to find the family a real nice house and now the family are much happier and safer than before.'

Volunteer Tutoring & Befriending

'When the pandemic started, our group moved from face-to-face meetings onto Zoom and Whatsapp. I started meeting for an hour nearly every week with M, a young man from Chad. He speaks Arabic, but has never been to school, so cannot write it. He is a remarkable character, who has managed to remain extremely positive despite continuing unsympathetic treatment by the Home Office. He has endured being made to share a squalid hotel room on the outbreak of the pandemic with another man with whom he had no common language. He was then shipped down to Wales to a hotel, before being brought back to Bedfordshire where he has been in a hotel room for many months.

During all this time he has remained in good spirits, and has worked extremely hard at his English. Every week he submits written work which we then discuss over Whatsapp. He spends hours every day on his English, and has now reached a level where he can socialise freely. His handwriting is clear, and he is beginning to cope surprisingly well with the vagaries of English spelling. He is also now beginning to read Arabic as a prelude to learning to write it.

He is very friendly by nature, and in Bedfordshire made local friends which resulted in him being recruited by two different football teams. He is athletic and extremely fast - so much that last year one of his teams scored 14 goals in the season, of which he scored 13! Earlier this year he decided to abandon football for athletics and joined a local running club. He entered his first half-marathon race, and came third. The next half-marathon he won! His ambition is to run internationally for the UK.

M's first request for UK residency was turned down, as was an appeal. He has been awaiting a further appeal for more than a year.'

'The 3 young people I and two other volunteers were working with we continued working with ever since lockdown. We did this on WhatsApp and Zoom, whatever worked for them. I have worked weekly ever since with 'G', although illness and other activities have sometimes altered this pattern. I worked with 'G' either on line or when things were easier, on a park bench sometimes under umbrellas sipping hot chocolate from a flask! She has worked hard and her spoken English has improved greatly. Also the friendship between us has been valuable. I set up a WhatsApp group with these three and I also keep in touch with some of our other students at the festivals in both our cultures and we exchange greetings and news.'

'Y came to English classes at BRASS for several months. He also started at Bedford College at Entry Level 1 English. When lockdown came and classes stopped, he continued to have 1:1 English sessions using WhatsApp. During this time he obtained his Leave to Remain. This meant he could apply for work. He has started work at nights in a warehouse and also in Bedford market on Saturdays. Now that courses are starting again, he has been offered a further course at Bedford College.'

Allotment



When the Covid lockdown commenced, restrictions were put in place at the BRASS allotment site which limited the number of people on the plot at any one time. However we worked the plot with the help of 2 volunteers and vegetables were grown and later distributed to some of our clients.

The pandemic has seen an increasing interest in allotmenting, it being a safe, outdoors activity and we decided to relinquish our second plot to others on the rapidly growing waiting list!



A kind donation enabled the purchase of manure, seed potatoes and seeds and we acquired a lawn mower for maintaining the grass paths. At the start of the growing season, vegetable seedlings, raised offsite by a volunteer were brought to the plot and planted in the various beds.

We grew potatoes, tomatoes, strawberries, courgettes, raspberries, rhubarb, kale, chard, sprouting broccoli, and flowering plants and shrubs: Marigolds, Osteospermum, Rudbeckia, Lupins, Echinacea, Calendula, Rose Campion, Sunflowers, Buddleia. The herb patch gave us Sage, Mint, Rosemary and Thyme. There are also Apple and Pear trees on the plot.

Our potato harvest was particularly successful and bags of potatoes were taken to clients by a BRASS staff member.

The BRASS allotment is a wonderful, safe environment for our asylum seeker and refugee clients to get involved with growing food and flowers, many of whom have worked the land in their home countries and so there is huge opportunity for all involved to learn about our different cultures and the different produce to grow.



One of our refugee clients has expressed an interest in having an allotment and we hope that he and others will be much more involved with the running of the venture next season.



Objectives and Activities

Vision

A world where refugees and asylum seekers are included, accepted and supported by society.

Mission Statement

BRASS is an established charity working to empower, inform and support refugees and asylum seekers and to protect rights with an aim to develop independence and involvement in UK society.

Strategic Objectives 2019-2022

The trustees have reviewed BRASS' strategic objectives and made some changes. These objectives will form the basis of planning our activities over the next three years. We plan to use these to inform annual targets to ensure we remain focussed on our strategic objectives.

- 1) Sustainable development of BRASS as an organisation to serve the interests and needs of refugees and asylum seekers and their families.
- 2) To enhance the ability of refugees and asylum seekers to understand and navigate UK procedures, processes and systems and promoting change to create a fairer system.
- 3) Provide opportunities for refugees and asylum seekers to increase independence, integration and confidence through learning and social activities.
- 4) Encourage participation of refugees and asylum seekers in the development and management of BRASS.
- 5) To build partnerships with other agencies, to cross refer clients, share information and campaign for the welfare of refugees and asylum seekers locally and nationally.
- 6) To inform and educate the community of Bedford and foster relationships between refugees and asylum seekers and the wider community.

Services

BRASS normally offers two drop-in advice sessions staffed by volunteers and BRASS staff - on Tuesdays 10am-2pm and Wednesdays 10am-2pm, although, this year, most sessions were conducted via telephone. These are accredited by the Office of the Immigration Services Commissioner (OISC) to give immigration advice. Through funding by the National Lottery Community Fund, BRASS employs a specialist benefits adviser, 2 employment advisers and 2 immigration advisers. We also support the Refugee Legal Assistance project run by the University of Bedford on its Luton Campus on Tuesday evenings during term time, which specialises in refugee family reunions. The project has, over recent years, supported 50 families.

Our tutoring programme matches volunteer tutors with refugees and asylum seekers who want to learn or improve their English language skills. This service is offered in the community, at the BRASS offices and online. Our education services had previously expanded and, whilst we provide small group tuition in

numeracy and preparing for the Life in the UK test, these sessions had to put on pause until such time as Covid permits.

The BRASS women's group would normally meet fortnightly, providing activities and peer support to refugee women but, due to Covid, activities have been severely curtailed. Our allotment has been kept 'ticking over' this year by volunteers. Our popular summer outings had continued to grow; our summer trips to the seaside were all usually oversubscribed though this year, sadly, the outings were not possible. Whilst BRASS plays a leading role in Refugee Week each year, organising a variety of events to promote refugee issues, this year's events were virtual.

Public Benefit

BRASS provides a range of services to support refugees and asylum seekers in the Bedford community and further afield. Free immigration advice is in short supply in this area and without the service provided by BRASS through phone and appointment advice sessions, many refugees and asylum seekers would be left to tackle the often complex immigration system alone. Advice is also provided on a range of resettlement issues including employment, housing, education and benefits. This advice enables our clients to better integrate into society and to learn to manage their own affairs independently. BRASS also provides a dedicated resettlement worker to support Syrian refugees who are resettled in Bedford, supporting them to settle and integrate into our community. Our Women's Group is another initiative to support integration and also to improve the self-confidence and language skills of the women who attend. For those who want to improve their English, BRASS' tutoring project matches volunteer tutors with clients. This relationship can often provide improved self-confidence and support with other aspects of integration. We now also run classes for those wishing to improve their numeracy and those preparing for the Life in the UK test. The BRASS allotment is now quite well established, providing a sense of community to clients, as well as providing asylum seekers (who are not allowed to work) activities to fill their time as well as fresh produce to take home.

BRASS is working to inform and educate the public on issues around immigration and asylum. Asylum seekers are a stigmatised group and through our work with Refugee Week and our coordinator giving talks to groups in the Bedford area, we are encouraging the public to look differently at refugees and asylum seekers and to see the positive contribution they make to our society.

Achievements and Performance

Progress towards Strategic Objectives 2018-2021

We have measured our progress on our previous strategic objectives as the review took place at the end of the reporting year.

Sustainable development of BRASS as an organisation to serve the interests and needs of refugees and asylum seekers.

BRASS' advice sessions, our core service, was provided mainly by telephone this year but there were face to face meetings with clients (with Covid measures in place) when it was deemed essential. We also continue to provide specialist benefits advice. Through our Syrian resettlement worker, we support families, in conjunction with Bedford Borough Council, who are resettled in Bedford from refugee camps in the Middle East. Our English Language project has been curtailed by Covid though we were able to offer online tuition with the help of our volunteer tutors. The Women's Group was not able to meet on a fortnightly basis as previously but we did keep in touch and offered virtual befriending.

The BRASS allotment is being developed by a small group of staff volunteers. They grow a great variety of vegetables which are given to our clients.

To enhance the ability of refugees and asylum seekers to understand UK procedures, processes and systems.

The UK immigration system can be confusing even for those of us who deal with it on a regular basis, so navigating it can be near impossible for those who are new to the country and may have limited English. Through our OISC registered drop-in immigration advice sessions, BRASS helps refugees and asylum seekers to deal with these complex systems. Advice is also provided around other non-immigration issues such as housing, employment and finance to aid integration. We are able to provide specialist advice through our immigration advisers, employment advisers and benefits adviser. Our popular English Language Tuition also gives refugees and asylum seekers the skills to better navigate British systems and our new classes in numeracy and preparing for the Life in the UK test also aid integration though these were dramatically reduced this year.

Increasing independence and confidence through learning and social activities.

The BRASS women's group has been put on hold during the last year as have other BRASS activities. We hope these activities will be reinstated in the New Year, Covid permitting. Our English language tuition project provides one-to-one tuition (online this year) to those who wish to improve their English and would normally also provide classes in numeracy and preparing for the Life in the UK test. It is hoped that this will enable them to become more independent and better able to integrate into society. Our allotment provides a place for our clients to relax, meet new people and grow their own food.

To raise awareness in wider society of issues faced by refugees and asylum seekers.

BRASS is always heavily involved with activities in Bedford celebrating Refugee Week and it was disappointing that this year, the event was limited to an online quiz. In normal times, myth-busting leaflets are given out to members of the public and events are held at various venues around the town including a very popular football tournament and fun day in one of Bedford's public parks. BRASS' coordinator gives talks to local groups and the feedback forms completed at the end of these talks indicate that perceptions of refugees and asylum seekers have been changed by what they have heard. We regularly publish positive stories about our clients and information about refugees and the asylum system on our website and Facebook page.

Encourage participation of refugees and asylum seekers in the development and management of BRASS.

BRASS continually encourages clients and former clients to become involved in BRASS, whether through attending groups and activities, becoming a volunteer or joining the committee. A former client is now on our committee and some of our volunteers have previously used our services. We have also provided social work placements to a number of students, some of whom are from a refugee background.

To build partnerships with other agencies, to cross refer clients, share information and campaign on behalf of the wellbeing of refugees and asylum seekers locally and nationally.

BRASS works with other agencies in a variety of ways. BRASS works with many local charities and networks. Our coordinator is involved with The New Migration Partnership, Bedford Borough Diversity Network and the Bedford Advice forum – local multi-agency forums where issues are raised, information exchanged and partnership solutions explored. BRASS is a key participant in the organisation of the annual Bedford Refugee Week which holds events to raise awareness of the issues facing refugees and asylum seekers.

Referrals are received from Children's Services which is responsible for unaccompanied Asylum seekers under the age of 18. The Community Voluntary Service (CVS) provides a regular supply of enthusiastic and committed volunteers and the Charity continues to receive invaluable support from the Bedford Borough Council and Bedfordshire Rural Communities Charity who support our tutoring project by carrying out the relevant DBS checks.

BRASS has been very involved with Refugee Week in Bedford for many years though this year the event was much smaller and hosted virtually. The aim of Refugee Week is to raise awareness of the issues faced by refugees and asylum seekers and the positive contributions they make to British society. Covid has had a serious effect upon the level of engagement with the local community in terms of giving talks to various groups in the Bedford area to change perceptions of these issues and gathering feedback from those who attend to assess changing attitudes.

Fundraising activities

We would like to thank the following organisations from whom we have received grants over the past year:

The National Lottery Community Fund	Harpur Trust
Bedford Borough Council	The 29th of May Charitable Trust
The Beds and Luton Community Foundation	Wixamtree Trust
Allen Lane Foundation	Steel Charitable Trust
Beatrice Laing Trust	Gale family Trust

We would also like to thank all of the individual donors who support BRASS through one off and regular donations.

BRASS would like to thank our fundraiser Karen Mayoh for her continued hard work and support.

Future Plans and the challenges ahead

Our services have been greatly curtailed this year but we look forward to reviving them when we come out of Covid into the 'new normal'.

We are now coming towards the end of our extended 5 year grant from the National Lottery Community Fund. Whilst this means an end to the regular income we have been receiving, it also provides an opportunity for us to apply for a new National Lottery Community Fund grant to support BRASS to develop our services. Therefore, a significant priority for the staff and trustees over the coming year will be to produce the end of grant evaluation to evidence the great work BRASS has done with this funding, along with planning for what we hope will come next.

BRASS will continue to prioritise the needs of our clients by providing good quality, reliable services. In order to safeguard BRASS and ensure that our vital services continue to be available, we will work to ensure good governance to maintain stability. BRASS is fortunate to be in a secure financial position, with more than 6 months of reserves. There are bound to be other challenges ahead, but we are confident that BRASS is well placed to face them.

Getting involved with BRASS

Volunteers are often needed for our drop-in, women's group, English tutoring and the allotment.

Friends of BRASS provide support to the organisation through fundraising and donations. BRASS is always in need of more people to help in this way.

If you are interested in using the drop-in space or are interested in becoming involved with BRASS as a volunteer or a friend, please contact Co-ordinator Brian Cunningham on 01234 211381 or brian@brass27b.org. For further information on any of our work, please check our website www.brassbedford.org.uk and Facebook pages www.facebook.com/brassbedford and www.facebook.com/brassallotment.

Charity Registration Number: 1096874

BEDFORDSHIRE REFUGEE AND ASYLUM SEEKER SUPPORT GROUP (BRASS)

TRUSTEES REPORT AND ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2021

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FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2021**

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LEGAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION

CHARITY NAME: Bedfordshire Refugee and Asylum Seeker Support Group

OTHER NAME CHARITY IS KNOWN BY: BRASS

REGISTERED CHARITY NUMBER: 1096874

CHARITY'S PRINCIPAL ADDRESS:

27B Tavistock Street
Bedford
MK40 2RB

NAMES OF THE CHARITY TRUSTEES WHO MANAGE THE CHARITY

Victoria Hilliard
Cathy Moorhouse
Morris Johns - Chair from 3rd July 2020
Sanja Radic
James Biggs
John Lehal

PROJECT CO-ORDINATOR

Brian Cunningham

BANKER

RBS

Bedford Branch
15-19 Mill Street
Bedford
MK40 3EU

REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES

REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2021

The Trustees of the charity present their report together with the financial statements for the year ended 31 March 2021, prepared in accordance with the Charities Act 2011 and the Accounting and Reporting by Charities Statement of Recommended Practice (SORP 2005).

From April 2020 to March 2021 Finance meetings and Trustee meetings were held quarterly, attended by the Chair, Committee members and staff.

BRASS employs a Project co-ordinator to oversee day to day business and to provide specialist advice, and full-time Syrian Family Support Officer and part-time Benefits Adviser, Integration Officer, Employment Advisers, Immigration Advisers, Finance Manager and Finance Officer. Much of the charity's work is undertaken by a team of dedicated volunteers.

OBJECTIVES AND REVIEW OF ACTIVITIES

The charity is an established non-political, voluntary organisation working to empower, inform and support refugees and asylum seekers and their families, protect their rights and enable them to develop their independence and involvement in UK society. Specifically the charity was established for the benefit of refugees and asylum seekers in the County of Bedfordshire to assist in the relief of poverty, hardship or distress. Services are delivered from a local government owned property in Bedford town centre which is leased by BRASS. Much work this year is done by phone and virtually from our offices and by staff from home due to Covid.

BRASS continues to have strong working relationships with local organisations providing advice so that individuals can get support from the organisations best placed to offer it. Luton Law Centre and Luton law firms have qualified solicitors and case workers who take referrals from BRASS and provide telephone support to BRASS advisors. BRASS also works with the University of Bedfordshire Law Department to assist refugees with family reunification applications. BRASS works with the Citizens Advice Bureau to cross refer clients and makes referrals to the local MP who, in specific cases, helps with representations to the Home Office.

Referrals are received from Children's Services which is responsible for unaccompanied asylum seekers under the age of 18. The Community Voluntary Service (CVS) provides a regular supply of enthusiastic and committed volunteers and the Charity continues to receive invaluable support from the Bedford Borough Council and Bedfordshire Rural Communities Charity who support our tutoring project by carrying out the relevant DBS checks.

BRASS works in partnership with both local and national charities. Advice and support are provided by the Refugee Council, which is the largest refugee agency in the UK, and Migrant Help. We are also a registered referrer for Bedford Food Bank.

BRASS seeks to support the local voluntary sector and work towards financial self-sustainability. It leases its offices in Bedford town centre but is able to sub-let office and drop-in space to other local charities at affordable rates.

BRASS is focused on working in partnership with other organisations to share knowledge and skills, prevent duplication, maximise effectiveness, cut costs and share facilities. On behalf of the Trustees of BRASS I can confirm that in carrying out our financial review we have considered and complied with our duty to have due regard to the Charity Commission's guidance on public benefit.

REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES cont'd....

ACHIEVEMENTS AND PERFORMANCE

During the last financial year BRASS has supported over 400 clients. We seek to support our client group's changing needs; the changes to the Benefits system and ever increasing complexity of immigration applications has increased the number of clients seeking support. BRASS now receives funding from the Big Lottery and will provide specialist advice through a Complex Caseworker for immigration matters and a Benefits Advisor. We will be able to provide additional social activities through our Integration Officer who will also be part funded by the Big Lottery.

We continue to run our advice sessions 2 times a week. However due to Covid these are now done by phone. We therefore have dealt with fewer client matters this year. We also offer appointments with our Benefits Adviser worker, Syrian Support and our Immigration Adviser where we feel the need is urgent or can only be addressed in person.

Our social activities this year have been greatly curtailed by Covid. We have done some activities online for Refugee Week. Our co-ordinator is still the chair of the Refugee Week steering group, and we have done some virtual one to one tutoring which we are further developing. BRASS' allotment is still up and running with both refugees and volunteers attending.

REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES cont'd....

FINANCIAL REVIEW

As in previous years, BRASS is very fortunate to have received funding from various different sources this year.

The BIG Lottery continues to fund our Co-ordinator, along with other posts and other running costs for five years.

The Harpur Trust continues its support by helping to fund our Finance Manager and Finance Officer salary costs and volunteer costs. Bedford Borough Council provided continued funding support towards staff costs, and BRASS has been able to utilise funding from the Government Transition Fund to support the introduction of the Universal Credit Scheme. Money has been used to fund a part-time Benefits Adviser.

We thank Wixamtree Trust for their continued ongoing support for funding. Also we would like to thank The Steel Trust, Gale Trust, 29th May 1961 charitable Trust and Margaret Brereton for providing unrestricted funding.

Total Incoming Resources during the financial year were £161,072, a small drop on the previous year. This has been used to provide funding to cover all our existing posts which are all filled and other direct costs and overheads.

Costs increased this year by approximately 6% to £158,758 mainly due to an increase in weekly hours for some staff.

FINANCIAL REVIEW RESERVES POLICY.

BRASS held cash at bank of £160,429 at 31 March 2021. Of these funds £89,111 is for restricted purposes, the remaining £71,318 is for unrestricted purposes. The Trustee Board have established a policy whereby it aims to maintain sufficient unrestricted funds not invested in tangible fixed assets and not required to meet future budgeted expenditure, being the "free reserves", to be sufficient to support the future growth of the charity and provide sufficient reserves for dealing with possible contingencies such as short-term cessation of project activity or redundancy.

Approved by the Trustees and signed on their behalf by:



Morris Johns

Chair

Date: 26th September 2021

INDEPENDENT EXAMINER'S REPORT TO THE TRUSTEES OF BEDFORDSHIRE REFUGEE AND ASYLUM SEEKER SUPPORT GROUP

I report on the financial statements of the charity for the year ended 31 March 2021 as set out on pages 7 to 13.

This report is made solely to the charity's trustees, as a body, in accordance with section 145 of the Charities Act 2011 ('the 2011 Act'). My work has been undertaken so that I might state to the charity's trustees those matters I am required to state to them in this report and for no other purpose. To the fullest extent permitted by law, I do not accept or assume responsibility to anyone other than the charity and the charity's trustees as a body, for my work, for this report, or for the opinions I have formed.

Respective responsibilities of trustees and examiner

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

It is my responsibility to:

- * examine the financial statements under section 145 of the 2011 Act;
- * to follow the procedures laid down in the General Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the 2011 Act; and
- * 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 financial statements presented with those records. It also includes consideration of any unusual items or disclosures in the financial statements 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 financial statements present a 'true and fair view' and the report is limited to those matters set out in the statement below.

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 financial statements which accord with the accounting records and comply with the accounting 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 financial statements to be reached.

John Esam
Mayfield Lodge
1 Main Road,
Biddenham
MK40 4BB



Dated: 26th September 2021

Statement of Financial Activities as at 31st March 2021

Incoming Resources	Note	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	Total 2021 £	Total 2020 £
Grants receivable	3	0	70,561	70,561	97,582
Donations and other fund raising activities		35,717	54,557	90,274	62,915
Rental income		0	0	0	12
Investment income		78	0	78	57
Other income		159	0	159	1,820
Total Incoming Resources		35,954	125,118	161,072	162,386
Resources Expended					
Costs of generating Funds					
Costs of generating funds		5,122	3,728	8,850	7,656
Charitable activities	4	9,299	138,554	147,853	141,159
Governance costs		538	1,517	2,055	1,279
Total Resources Expended		14,959	143,799	158,758	150,094
Net Incoming/ (Outgoing) Resources		20,995	(18,681)	2,314	12,292
Funds brought forward		50,764	113,094	163,858	151,566
Transfers between funds					
Funds carried forward		71,759	94,413	166,172	163,858

All of the charity's activities derive from continuing operations during the above two periods.

Balance Sheet at 31 March 2021

	Note	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	Total 2021 £	Total 2020 £
Fixed assets					
Tangible assets	5	443	2,415	2,858	1,847
Current Assets					
Debtors and Prepayments	6	0	28,743	28,743	65,907
Cash and Bank in hand		71,318	89,111	160,429	137,460
Total Current Assets		71,318	117,854	189,172	203,367
Creditors Amounts falling due within one year	7	0	25,858	25,858	41,355
Net Current Assets		71,318	91,996	163,314	162,012
Net Assets		71,761	94,411	166,172	163,858
Funds of the Charity					
Unrestricted funds	10	54,915	0	54,915	19,361
Restricted funds	10	15,000	91,996	106,996	141,247
Restricted capital reserve	11	443	2,415	2,858	1847
Designated Funds		1,403	0	1,403	1,403
Total Funds		71,761	94,411	166,172	163,858

Trustees' responsibilities

The trustees acknowledge their responsibility for complying with the requirements of the Charities Commission and confirm that the accounts have been prepared in Accordance with Accounting and Reporting by Charities (SORP 2005) and Charities Act 2011.

Approved by the trustees and signed on their behalf by:



Name: Morris Johns Dated: 26th September 2021

Notes to the Financial Statements for the Year Ended 31 March 2021

1. Accounting Policies

Statement of compliance

The financial statements have been prepared on the basis of historic cost and in accordance with the applicable United Kingdom Reporting Standards, the Charities Act 2011 and the Accounting and Reporting by Charities Statement of Recommended Practice (SORP 2005).

Basis of Preparation

As permitted by SORP 2005 the trustees have adapted the heading used to describe Incoming Resources and Resources Expended within the Statement of Financial Activities when presenting the results for the year.

Incoming Resources

Incoming resources are recognised when received or receivable by the charity. Income is derived from fund raising activities, donations and the sub-letting of rented property. Grants are recognised on receipt or award unless, in the judgement of the trustees, conditions attached to the grant make it improbable that they will be received.

Restricted Funds

Restricted funds are to be used for a specific purpose as laid down by the donor. Expenditure which meets these criteria is identified against the fund.

Unrestricted Funds

Unrestricted funds are incoming resources received or receivable generated for charitable purposes and available for use at the discretion of the trustees in furtherance of the general objectives of the charity and have not been designated for other purposes.

Paid Employees

The charity employs a Project Co-ordinator, part-time Facilities (Support) Officer and part-time Benefits Advisor and a Syrian Family Support Worker. These four posts are funded through restricted grants.

Trustee Expenses

There were no payments or reimbursements made to any trustees during the financial year.

Fixed Assets

Assets with a useful life of more than two years are capitalised at cost and depreciated over their useful life.

Depreciation on computer equipment is charged at 33% on a straight line basis.

Depreciation on furniture and other equipment is charged at 25% on a straight line basis.

Fixed Assets funded by capital grants are capitalised and a restricted capital reserve created. The reserve is reduced by the depreciation charge.

Notes to the Financial Statements for the Year Ended 31 March 2021

2. Operating Leases

Rentals payable under operating leases are charged on a straight line basis over the term of the lease.

Rent under operating leases amounted to £6,875 (2019-20: £7,917).

The annual commitment under operating leases for land and buildings amounts to £6,875 where the term remaining is between one and five years. There are no further lease commitments.

	Unrestricted Funds	Restricted Funds	Total 2021	Total 2020
	£	£	£	£
3. Income from Grants, donations and legacies:				
	0	70,561	70,561	97,582
Donations from other charities, companies	35,717	54,557	90,274	62,915
Donations from trusts, individuals and similar	35,717	125,118	160,835	160,497
Total grants received				

	Unrestricted Funds	Restricted Funds	Total 2021	Total 2020	
	£	£	£	£	
4. Charitable Activities: Resources expended under charitable activities were:	(155)	121,591	121,436	106,543	*Nest refund
Staff payroll costs	0	0	0	666	
Volunteer expenses & training	0	1,254	1,254	1,411	
Staff travel & training	1,140	0	1,140	840	
Social worker	966	8,429	9,395	10,270	
Rent ,Rates & Insurance (Note)	0	3,846	3,846	4,237	
IT, Telephone & Internet	6,795	1,997	8,792	3,948	
Utilities, cleaning & maintenance.	0	1,105	1,105	2,185	
Stationery, printing & postage	0	73	73	367	
Publications & subscriptions	462	0	462	368	
Web & promotional costs	90	0	90	4,544	
Client outings & welfare costs	107	794	901	335	
Depreciation	5,554	4,710	10,264	14,380	
Other expenses	14,959	143,799	158,758	150,094	
Total					

Notes to the Financial Statements for the Year Ended 31 March 2021

5. Fixed Assets	Furniture & Equipment	Total Fixed Assets
Cost	£	£
At 1 April 2020	12,241	12,241
Additions	1,912	1,912
At 31 March 2021	<u>14,153</u>	<u>14,153</u>
Depreciation		
At 1 April 2020	10,394	10,394
Charge for year	901	901
At 31 March 2021	<u>11,295</u>	<u>11,295</u>
Net Book Value		
At 31 March 2020	1,847	1,847
At 31 March 2021	<u>2,858</u>	<u>2,858</u>

6. Debtors and prepayments due within one year	2021	2020
	£	£
Debtors	0	0
Prepayments and accrued income	28,743	65,907
Total Debtors	<u>28,743</u>	<u>65,907</u>

7. Creditors and accruals due within one year	2021	2020
	£	£
Creditors	30	30
Deferred income	15,000	32,233
Accruals	10,828	9,092
Total creditors	<u>25,858</u>	<u>41,355</u>

8. Staff Costs	2021	2020
	£	£
Gross wages	114,680	100,027
Employers National Insurance costs	6,562	6,082
Employers National Insurance rebate	(4,000)	(3,000)
Pension costs	4,194	3,434
	<u>121,436</u>	<u>106,543</u>

During the year BRASS employed an average of 7 employees, one full and six part-time. No employee earned more than £60,000.

Notes to the Financial Statements for the Year Ended 31 March 2021

9. Restricted Income Funds as at March 31 2021

Fund Name	Purpose and restriction
Bedford Borough Council - Syrian Refugees	Caseworker, management, IT equipment, telephone, travel and overhead costs.
Big Lottery (i)	Project co-ordinator salary, part-time benefits adviser, complex worker & integration worker salaries, with oncosts, general running costs and some overhead costs.
Harpur Trust (ii)	Part-time finance manager & finance assistant, on costs and general running costs
Harpur Trust (iii)	Administrator costs
Small Restricted Grants (iv)	Restricted Reserves

10. Movement of Major Funds

Fund Names	Balance at 1st April 2020 £	Incoming resources £	Outgoing Resources £	Transfers £	Balance at 31st March 2021 £
Other	50,764	35,954	(14,959)		71,759
Unrestricted Funds	50,764	35,954	(14,959)	0	71,759
Employment Support	0	17,564	(10,005)	0	7,559
Bedford Borough Council Syrian Refugee	14,462	35,170	(34,543)	0	15,089
BLCF2	5,000	0	0	0	5,000
Cambridgeshire Community Fund	0	0	0	0	0
Training	682	0	0	(682)	0
Big Lottery (i)	61,973	42,561	(67,329)	0	37,205
Allen Lane	5,262	0	(262)	0	5,000
Harpur Trust (ii)	7,073	28,000	(18,434)	0	16,639
Harpur Trust (iii)	15,590	0	(12,432)	0	3,158
Small restricted grants (iv)	1,204	460	0	682	2,346
	111,246	123,755	(143,005)	0	91,995
Restricted capital reserve (Note 11)	1,848	1,363	(794)	0	2,417
Restricted Funds	113,094	125,118	(143,799)	0	94,413
Total Funds	163,858	161,072	(158,758)	0	166,172

- i) The final year of the five year funding from Big Lottery Grant of £300,000 has been received. An overlap of £33,500 has been paid to bridge the gap until the next grant is awarded. Funding has been allocated towards the salaries and on-costs of the Project Co-ordinator, Benefits Adviser, Complex Caseworker and Integration Worker with on costs, general running costs and overhead costs. A further £8,929 was granted to fund additional Benefit Adviser hours.
- ii) A two year grant was awarded by Harpur Trust to support part-time Finance Manager and part-time Finance Assistant posts.
- iii) A further grant has been awarded by Harpur Trust to fund the Administrator post.
- iv) Employment support worker hours have been funded this year for 30 months from August 2020.

Notes to the Financial Statements for the Year Ended 31 March 2021

11. Movement of restricted capital reserves

Reserve Names	Reserves 1st April 2020 £	Additional Reserves £	Outgoing resources £	Transfers £	Reserves 31st March 2021 £
Restricted capital reserve	1,848	1,911	(901)	0	2,858

Charity Registration Number: 1096874

BEDFORDSHIRE REFUGEE AND ASYLUM SEEKER SUPPORT GROUP (BRASS)

TRUSTEES REPORT AND ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2021

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LEGAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION

CHARITY NAME: Bedfordshire Refugee and Asylum Seeker Support Group

OTHER NAME CHARITY IS KNOWN BY: BRASS

REGISTERED CHARITY NUMBER: 1096874

CHARITY'S PRINCIPAL ADDRESS:

27B Tavistock Street
Bedford
MK40 2RB

NAMES OF THE CHARITY TRUSTEES WHO MANAGE THE CHARITY

Victoria Hilliard
Cathy Moorhouse
Morris Johns - Chair from 3rd July 2020
Sanja Radic
James Biggs
John Lehal

PROJECT CO-ORDINATOR

Brian Cunningham

BANKER

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15-19 Mill Street
Bedford
MK40 3EU

REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES

REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2021

The Trustees of the charity present their report together with the financial statements for the year ended 31 March 2021, prepared in accordance with the Charities Act 2011 and the Accounting and Reporting by Charities Statement of Recommended Practice (SORP 2005).

From April 2020 to March 2021 Finance meetings and Trustee meetings were held quarterly, attended by the Chair, Committee members and staff.

BRASS employs a Project co-ordinator to oversee day to day business and to provide specialist advice, and full-time Syrian Family Support Officer and part-time Benefits Adviser, Integration Officer, Employment Advisers, Immigration Advisers, Finance Manager and Finance Officer. Much of the charity's work is undertaken by a team of dedicated volunteers.

OBJECTIVES AND REVIEW OF ACTIVITIES

The charity is an established non-political, voluntary organisation working to empower, inform and support refugees and asylum seekers and their families, protect their rights and enable them to develop their independence and involvement in UK society. Specifically the charity was established for the benefit of refugees and asylum seekers in the County of Bedfordshire to assist in the relief of poverty, hardship or distress. Services are delivered from a local government owned property in Bedford town centre which is leased by BRASS. Much work this year is done by phone and virtually from our offices and by staff from home due to Covid.

BRASS continues to have strong working relationships with local organisations providing advice so that individuals can get support from the organisations best placed to offer it. Luton Law Centre and Luton law firms have qualified solicitors and case workers who take referrals from BRASS and provide telephone support to BRASS advisors. BRASS also works with the University of Bedfordshire Law Department to assist refugees with family reunification applications. BRASS works with the Citizens Advice Bureau to cross refer clients and makes referrals to the local MP who, in specific cases, helps with representations to the Home Office.

Referrals are received from Children's Services which is responsible for unaccompanied asylum seekers under the age of 18. The Community Voluntary Service (CVS) provides a regular supply of enthusiastic and committed volunteers and the Charity continues to receive invaluable support from the Bedford Borough Council and Bedfordshire Rural Communities Charity who support our tutoring project by carrying out the relevant DBS checks.

BRASS works in partnership with both local and national charities. Advice and support are provided by the Refugee Council, which is the largest refugee agency in the UK, and Migrant Help. We are also a registered referrer for Bedford Food Bank.

BRASS seeks to support the local voluntary sector and work towards financial self-sustainability. It leases its offices in Bedford town centre but is able to sub-let office and drop-in space to other local charities at affordable rates.

BRASS is focused on working in partnership with other organisations to share knowledge and skills, prevent duplication, maximise effectiveness, cut costs and share facilities. On behalf of the Trustees of BRASS I can confirm that in carrying out our financial review we have considered and complied with our duty to have due regard to the Charity Commission's guidance on public benefit.

REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES cont'd....

ACHIEVEMENTS AND PERFORMANCE

During the last financial year BRASS has supported over 400 clients. We seek to support our client group's changing needs; the changes to the Benefits system and ever increasing complexity of immigration applications has increased the number of clients seeking support. BRASS now receives funding from the Big Lottery and will provide specialist advice through a Complex Caseworker for immigration matters and a Benefits Advisor. We will be able to provide additional social activities through our Integration Officer who will also be part funded by the Big Lottery.

We continue to run our advice sessions 2 times a week. However due to Covid these are now done by phone. We therefore have dealt with fewer client matters this year. We also offer appointments with our Benefits Adviser worker, Syrian Support and our Immigration Adviser where we feel the need is urgent or can only be addressed in person.

Our social activities this year have been greatly curtailed by Covid. We have done some activities online for Refugee Week. Our co-ordinator is still the chair of the Refugee Week steering group, and we have done some some virtual one to one tutoring which we are further developing. BRASS' allotment is still up and running with both refugees and volunteers attending.

REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES cont'd....

FINANCIAL REVIEW

As in previous years, BRASS is very fortunate to have received funding from various different sources this year.

The BIG Lottery continues to fund our Co-ordinator, along with other posts and other running costs for five years.

The Harpur Trust continues its support by helping to fund our Finance Manager and Finance Officer salary costs and volunteer costs. Bedford Borough Council provided continued funding support towards staff costs, and BRASS has been able to utilise funding from the Government Transition Fund to support the introduction of the Universal Credit Scheme. Money has been used to fund a part-time Benefits Adviser.

We thank Wixamtree Trust for their continued ongoing support for funding. Also we would like to thank The Steel Trust, Gale Trust, 29th May 1961 charitable Trust and Margaret Brereton for providing unrestricted funding.

Total Incoming Resources during the financial year were £161,072, a small drop on the previous year. This has been used to provide funding to cover all our existing posts which are all filled and other direct costs and overheads.

Costs increased this year by approximately 6% to £158,758 mainly due to an increase in weekly hours for some staff.

FINANCIAL REVIEW RESERVES POLICY.

BRASS held cash at bank of £160,429 at 31 March 2021. Of these funds £89,111 is for restricted purposes, the remaining £71,318 is for unrestricted purposes. The Trustee Board have established a policy whereby it aims to maintain sufficient unrestricted funds not invested in tangible fixed assets and not required to meet future budgeted expenditure, being the "free reserves", to be sufficient to support the future growth of the charity and provide sufficient reserves for dealing with possible contingencies such as short-term cessation of project activity or redundancy.

Approved by the Trustees and signed on their behalf by:



Morris Johns

Chair

Date: 26th September 2021

INDEPENDENT EXAMINER'S REPORT TO THE TRUSTEES OF BEDFORDSHIRE REFUGEE AND ASYLUM SEEKER SUPPORT GROUP

I report on the financial statements of the charity for the year ended 31 March 2021 as set out on pages 7 to 13.

This report is made solely to the charity's trustees, as a body, in accordance with section 145 of the Charities Act 2011 ('the 2011 Act'). My work has been undertaken so that I might state to the charity's trustees those matters I am required to state to them in this report and for no other purpose. To the fullest extent permitted by law, I do not accept or assume responsibility to anyone other than the charity and the charity's trustees as a body, for my work, for this report, or for the opinions I have formed.

Respective responsibilities of trustees and examiner

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

It is my responsibility to:

- * examine the financial statements under section 145 of the 2011 Act;
- * to follow the procedures laid down in the General Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the 2011 Act; and
- * 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 financial statements presented with those records. It also includes consideration of any unusual items or disclosures in the financial statements 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 financial statements present a 'true and fair view' and the report is limited to those matters set out in the statement below.

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 financial statements which accord with the accounting records and comply with the accounting 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 financial statements to be reached.

John Esam
Mayfield Lodge
1 Main Road,
Biddenham
MK40 4BB



Dated: 26th September 2021

Statement of Financial Activities as at 31st March 2021

Incoming Resources	Note	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	Total 2021 £	Total 2020 £
Grants receivable	3	0	70,561	70,561	97,582
Donations and other fund raising activities		35,717	54,557	90,274	62,915
Rental income		0	0	0	12
Investment income		78	0	78	57
Other income		159	0	159	1,820
Total Incoming Resources		35,954	125,118	161,072	162,386
Resources Expended					
Costs of generating Funds					
Costs of generating funds		5,122	3,728	8,850	7,656
Charitable activities	4	9,299	138,554	147,853	141,159
Governance costs		538	1,517	2,055	1,279
Total Resources Expended		14,959	143,799	158,758	150,094
Net Incoming/ (Outgoing) Resources		20,995	(18,681)	2,314	12,292
Funds brought forward		50,764	113,094	163,858	151,566
Transfers between funds					
Funds carried forward		71,759	94,413	166,172	163,858

All of the charity's activities derive from continuing operations during the above two periods.

Balance Sheet at 31 March 2021

	Note	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	Total 2021 £	Total 2020 £
Fixed assets					
Tangible assets	5	443	2,415	2,858	1,847
Current Assets					
Debtors and Prepayments	6	0	28,743	28,743	65,907
Cash and Bank in hand		71,318	89,111	160,429	137,460
Total Current Assets		71,318	117,854	189,172	203,367
Creditors Amounts falling due within one year	7	0	25,858	25,858	41,355
Net Current Assets		71,318	91,996	163,314	162,012
Net Assets		71,761	94,411	166,172	163,858
Funds of the Charity					
Unrestricted funds	10	54,915	0	54,915	19,361
Restricted funds	10	15,000	91,996	106,996	141,247
Restricted capital reserve	11	443	2,415	2,858	1847
Designated Funds		1,403	0	1,403	1,403
Total Funds		71,761	94,411	166,172	163,858

Trustees' responsibilities

The trustees acknowledge their responsibility for complying with the requirements of the Charities Commission and confirm that the accounts have been prepared in Accordance with Accounting and Reporting by Charities (SORP 2005) and Charities Act 2011.

Approved by the trustees and signed on their behalf by:



Name: Morris Johns Dated: 26th September 2021

Notes to the Financial Statements for the Year Ended 31 March 2021

1. Accounting Policies

Statement of compliance

The financial statements have been prepared on the basis of historic cost and in accordance with the applicable United Kingdom Reporting Standards, the Charities Act 2011 and the Accounting and Reporting by Charities Statement of Recommended Practice (SORP 2005).

Basis of Preparation

As permitted by SORP 2005 the trustees have adapted the heading used to describe Incoming Resources and Resources Expended within the Statement of Financial Activities when presenting the results for the year.

Incoming Resources

Incoming resources are recognised when received or receivable by the charity. Income is derived from fund raising activities, donations and the sub-letting of rented property. Grants are recognised on receipt or award unless, in the judgement of the trustees, conditions attached to the grant make it improbable that they will be received.

Restricted Funds

Restricted funds are to be used for a specific purpose as laid down by the donor. Expenditure which meets these criteria is identified against the fund.

Unrestricted Funds

Unrestricted funds are incoming resources received or receivable generated for charitable purposes and available for use at the discretion of the trustees in furtherance of the general objectives of the charity and have not been designated for other purposes.

Paid Employees

The charity employs a Project Co-ordinator, part-time Facilities (Support) Officer and part-time Benefits Advisor and a Syrian Family Support Worker. These four posts are funded through restricted grants.

Trustee Expenses

There were no payments or reimbursements made to any trustees during the financial year.

Fixed Assets

Assets with a useful life of more than two years are capitalised at cost and depreciated over their useful life.

Depreciation on computer equipment is charged at 33% on a straight line basis.

Depreciation on furniture and other equipment is charged at 25% on a straight line basis.

Fixed Assets funded by capital grants are capitalised and a restricted capital reserve created. The reserve is reduced by the depreciation charge.

Notes to the Financial Statements for the Year Ended 31 March 2021

2. Operating Leases

Rentals payable under operating leases are charged on a straight line basis over the term of the lease.

Rent under operating leases amounted to £6,875 (2019-20: £7,917).

The annual commitment under operating leases for land and buildings amounts to £6,875 where the term remaining is between one and five years. There are no further lease commitments.

	Unrestricted Funds	Restricted Funds	Total 2021	Total 2020
	£	£	£	£
3. Income from Grants, donations and legacies:				
	0	70,561	70,561	97,582
Donations from other charities, companies	35,717	54,557	90,274	62,915
Donations from trusts, individuals and similar	35,717	125,118	160,835	160,497
Total grants received				

	Unrestricted Funds	Restricted Funds	Total 2021	Total 2020	
	£	£	£	£	
4. Charitable Activities: Resources expended under charitable activities were:	(155)	121,591	121,436	106,543	*Nest refund
Staff payroll costs	0	0	0	666	
Volunteer expenses & training	0	1,254	1,254	1,411	
Staff travel & training	1,140	0	1,140	840	
Social worker	966	8,429	9,395	10,270	
Rent ,Rates & Insurance (Note)	0	3,846	3,846	4,237	
IT, Telephone & Internet	6,795	1,997	8,792	3,948	
Utilities, cleaning & maintenance.	0	1,105	1,105	2,185	
Stationery, printing & postage	0	73	73	367	
Publications & subscriptions	462	0	462	368	
Web & promotional costs	90	0	90	4,544	
Client outings & welfare costs	107	794	901	335	
Depreciation	5,554	4,710	10,264	14,380	
Other expenses	14,959	143,799	158,758	150,094	
Total					

Notes to the Financial Statements for the Year Ended 31 March 2021

5. Fixed Assets	Furniture & Equipment	Total Fixed Assets
Cost	£	£
At 1 April 2020	12,241	12,241
Additions	1,912	1,912
At 31 March 2021	<u>14,153</u>	<u>14,153</u>
Depreciation		
At 1 April 2020	10,394	10,394
Charge for year	901	901
At 31 March 2021	<u>11,295</u>	<u>11,295</u>
Net Book Value		
At 31 March 2020	1,847	1,847
At 31 March 2021	<u>2,858</u>	<u>2,858</u>

6. Debtors and prepayments due within one year	2021	2020
	£	£
Debtors	0	0
Prepayments and accrued income	28,743	65,907
Total Debtors	<u>28,743</u>	<u>65,907</u>

7. Creditors and accruals due within one year	2021	2020
	£	£
Creditors	30	30
Deferred income	15,000	32,233
Accruals	10,828	9,092
Total creditors	<u>25,858</u>	<u>41,355</u>

8. Staff Costs	2021	2020
	£	£
Gross wages	114,680	100,027
Employers National Insurance costs	6,562	6,082
Employers National Insurance rebate	(4,000)	(3,000)
Pension costs	4,194	3,434
	<u>121,436</u>	<u>106,543</u>

During the year BRASS employed an average of 7 employees, one full and six part-time. No employee earned more than £60,000.

Notes to the Financial Statements for the Year Ended 31 March 2021

9. Restricted Income Funds as at March 31 2021

Fund Name	Purpose and restriction
Bedford Borough Council - Syrian Refugees	Caseworker, management, IT equipment, telephone, travel and overhead costs.
Big Lottery (i)	Project co-ordinator salary, part-time benefits adviser, complex worker & integration worker salaries, with oncosts, general running costs and some overhead costs.
Harpur Trust (ii)	Part-time finance manager & finance assistant, on costs and general running costs
Harpur Trust (iii)	Administrator costs
Small Restricted Grants (iv)	Restricted Reserves

10. Movement of Major Funds

Fund Names	Balance at 1st April 2020 £	Incoming resources £	Outgoing Resources £	Transfers £	Balance at 31st March 2021 £
Other	50,764	35,954	(14,959)		71,759
Unrestricted Funds	50,764	35,954	(14,959)	0	71,759
Employment Support	0	17,564	(10,005)	0	7,559
Bedford Borough Council Syrian Refugee	14,462	35,170	(34,543)	0	15,089
BLCF2	5,000	0	0	0	5,000
Cambridgeshire Community Fund	0	0	0	0	0
Training	682	0	0	(682)	0
Big Lottery (i)	61,973	42,561	(67,329)	0	37,205
Allen Lane	5,262	0	(262)	0	5,000
Harpur Trust (ii)	7,073	28,000	(18,434)	0	16,639
Harpur Trust (iii)	15,590	0	(12,432)	0	3,158
Small restricted grants (iv)	1,204	460	0	682	2,346
	111,246	123,755	(143,005)	0	91,995
Restricted capital reserve (Note 11)	1,848	1,363	(794)	0	2,417
Restricted Funds	113,094	125,118	(143,799)	0	94,413
Total Funds	163,858	161,072	(158,758)	0	166,172

- i) The final year of the five year funding from Big Lottery Grant of £300,000 has been received. An overlap of £33,500 has been paid to bridge the gap until the next grant is awarded. Funding has been allocated towards the salaries and on-costs of the Project Co-ordinator, Benefits Adviser, Complex Caseworker and Integration Worker with on costs, general running costs and overhead costs. A further £8,929 was granted to fund additional Benefit Adviser hours.
- ii) A two year grant was awarded by Harpur Trust to support part-time Finance Manager and part-time Finance Assistant posts.
- iii) A further grant has been awarded by Harpur Trust to fund the Administrator post.
- iv) Employment support worker hours have been funded this year for 30 months from August 2020.

Notes to the Financial Statements for the Year Ended 31 March 2021

11. Movement of restricted capital reserves

Reserve Names	Reserves 1st April 2020 £	Additional Reserves £	Outgoing resources £	Transfers £	Reserves 31st March 2021 £
Restricted capital reserve	1,848	1,911	(901)	0	2,858