



Annual Report

2022

(April 2021 – March 2022)

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

Contents

Reference and administrative details	2
Structure, governance and management	4
Message from the Chair of Trustees	7
Co-ordinator's report	8
Services updates	10
Objectives and activities	15
Achievements and performance	17
Getting involved with BRASS	20
Accounts	Appendix

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.

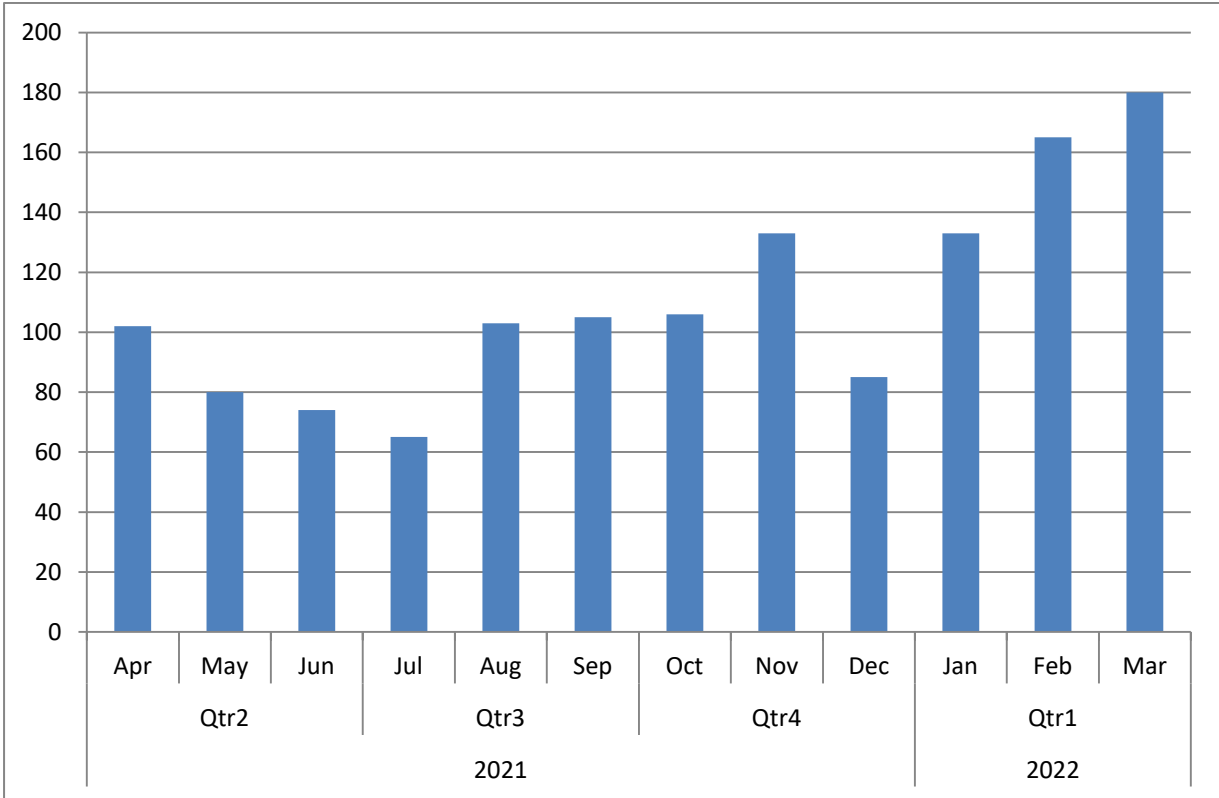
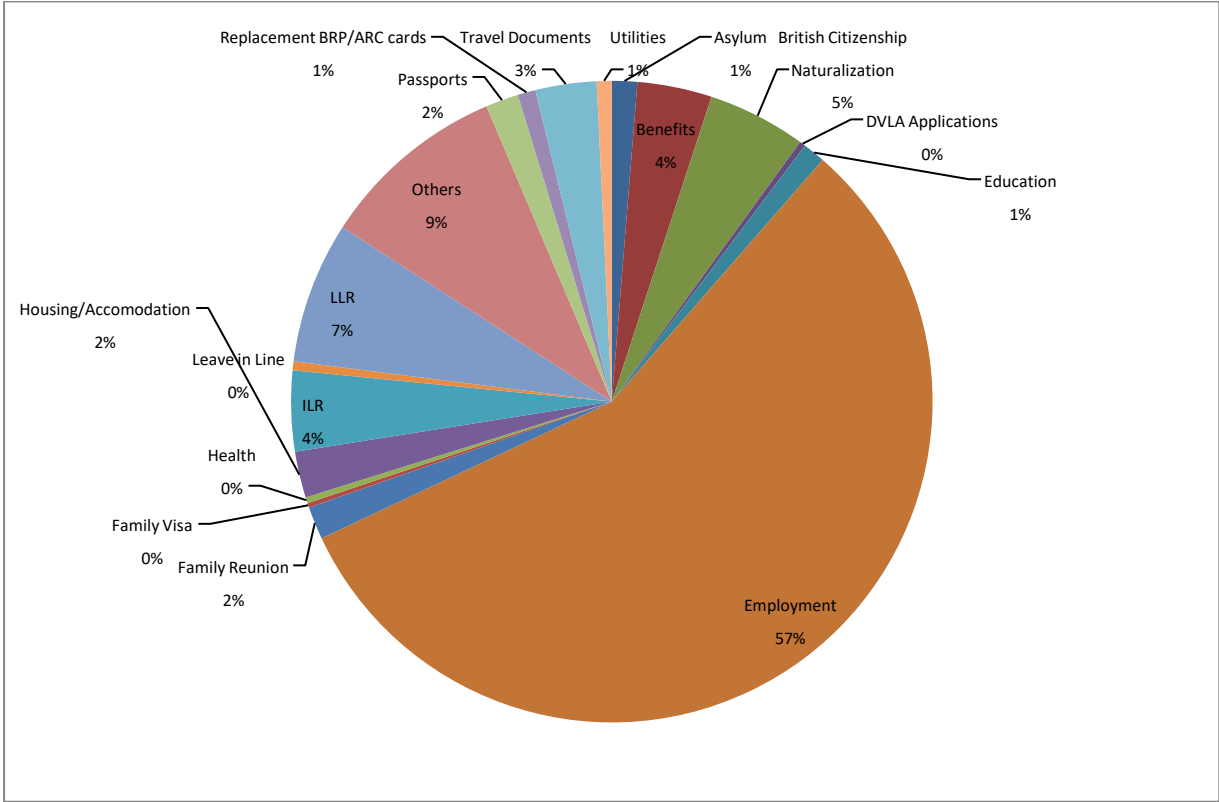
We have two Immigration Advisers - Helena Maddock and Sharifullah Dorani - who support clients with immigration matters. Over the past year, they, under Brian's supervision, have been able to help dozens of clients with their immigration applications. They also double up as Employment Advisers. This 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**

Legal and Administrative Information	Page 2
Report of the Trustees	Pages 3-5
Independent Examiners Report	Page 6
Statement of Financial Activities	Page 7
Balance Sheet	Page 8
Notes to the Financial Statements	Pages 9-12

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.

