

London Churches Refugee Fund

Charity number
1121108

Annual Report 2023



Fundraising carol singing,
Highbury & Islington Station December 2023

www.lcrf.org.uk

Letter from our Chair

Dear friends

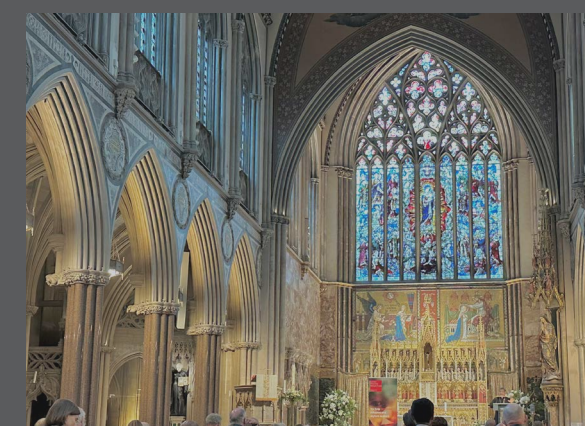
Since 2006 the London Churches refugee fund has awarded 570 grants totalling £437,985 to 96 different Refugee projects in London. I want to say a huge “Thank you!” to the hundreds of individuals and scores of churches whose support and generosity has made this possible.

LCRF grants have to be used to purchase basic but ‘life-saving’ essentials to help the tens of thousands of destitute refugees in London, who come to these projects seeking help, such as:

Food vouchers, Nappies, underwear, Oyster cards, Phone credit, Hygiene packs, Sanitary products, Emergency payments.

The maximum Grant we currently award is £1000, and many refugee projects apply to LCRF regularly year after year. The need never goes away.

Surprisingly there are few, if any, similar sources of funding available to Refugee Projects in London aimed at meeting these basic needs of destitute asylum seekers. You can read in this Annual Report anonymous examples from the projects we support of the ways in which LCRF grants have made a life changing difference to refugees in London who are in desperate need.



These photos were taken at LCRF's annual Speaker's Event, held at the Church of the Immaculate Conception May 2023W

The London, Churches, Refugee Fund, a registered charity, has no staff, no office, and no equipment! The trustees, and three core volunteers, carry out all the work of the fund voluntarily using our own resources, experience, energy, time, and home equipment! As a result our overheads are minimal, which means that nearly every penny of every donation we receive goes directly into our grants, providing practical support for thousands of destitute refugees in London.

Please will you, dear reader, very kindly consider:

- Becoming a monthly donor, or
- Increasing your monthly donation, if you already make one
- Making a generous one-off donation
- Organising a fundraising event or collection for LCRF
- Recruiting a friend or family member to become a supporter of LCRF
- Inviting us to speak at your church about the work of LCRF
- Leaving a legacy to LCRF in your will.

And whatever you do – please pray for the work of LCRF and most especially for our refugee neighbours in need across London whom we seek to help.

Most sincerely,

Chris Brice

Chair of LCRF

Who Did We Support in 2023?

In 2023 our Fund received £48,603 in donations. With Gift Aid and the sale of Christmas cards and Welcome Gifts, our total income was £59,530. We made grants of £53,400 (our highest-ever figure) and incurred just £1,385 in overheads – half of which related to the printing and distribution of cards. That produced a surplus of £4,745 for the year.

In 2023, we were able to help 41 different organisations listed opposite each with grants of up to £1,000. Grants are capped by the funds available at the time of the awards. In the rare cases when we reject an application it is normally because it is not felt to contribute directly to the relief of destitution among refugees and asylum seekers in London.



'Christmas Wishes'

One of LCRF's Christmas cards this year
Designed by artist Mehri, from West London Welcome

Organisations supported in 2023

Action for Refugees Lewisham (AFRIL)
African Refugee Community
Baobab Centre for Young Survivors in Exile
Babylon Migrants Project
Citizens of the World Choir
CAWS Homeless Project
CARAS Community Action for Refugees and Asylum Seekers
Care for Calais
Christ Church Feltham
Cotton Tree Trust
Croydon Refugee Day Centre
Dost Centre for Young Refugees and Migrants
Freedom from Torture
Hackney Migrant Centre
Happy Baby Community
Haringey Migrant Support Centre
Hope for the Young
Housing Justice
Islington Centre for Refugees and Migrants
JCORE
Jesuit Refugee Service
LEWCAS
Lewisham Refugee and Migrant Network
Migrant Voice
Migrants Organise
New Citizens' Gateway
NNLS Asylum Seekers Drop-in
Notre Dame Refugee Centre
Refugee Council
Room to Heal
Samphire Project
South London Refugee Association
St James' Piccadilly
St. Martin in the Fields Sunday International Group
Shrimad Rajchandra Mission Dharampur
Union Chapel
Waging Peace
Waltham Forest Migrant Action
West London Welcome

On the Front Line – Case Studies from the projects we help

D from Nigeria was supported by the Refugee Council's Destitution Service (RC) between 2019 and 2022.

He was sleeping rough, and it was not clear where he was in the asylum process when he came to the UK. He had high levels of anxiety expressed through angry outbursts, and a reluctance to engage with the initial assessment. The project coordinator, Kellie, sensed that she would need to take time with him to build trust. D began regularly attending the drop-in service, where the RC was able to support him with meeting his basic needs, including providing travel passes provided by LCRF. Over time he began to engage with the RC and trust them. During 2020 and 2021, Kellie worked with partner agencies with casework support for D. This included getting him a hotel room via the “Everyone In” scheme during the pandemic, providing emotional support through the regular therapeutic zoom group, and ultimately getting him accommodation and financial support from the local authority due to his care needs. He recently told Kellie that he took a chance on her because he saw that she didn’t give up on him, and that he never thought he could be helped like he had been. Kellie said: “This highlights how providing a trauma-informed service is an effective way of working with people who present with high levels of anxiety, distrust and a reluctance to engage. The drop-in service is an effective way of building trust: we provide a framework of safety through meeting basic needs – food, showers, laundry, travel money, being transparent and making sure everyone is treated with dignity and respect”.



Images produced by refugees following an LCRF organised drawing competition

J is 16 years old and arrived in the UK in June 2021.

He was immediately arrested, and placed in Home Office accommodation. Despite telling the local authority that he was 16, he had been incorrectly visually assessed as an adult, and was being accommodated in a hotel alongside much older adults. He was terrified, and was sharing bathroom facilities with many people much older than him. He had no access to a keyworker or social services, and was at risk of mistreatment. He was brought to South London Refugee Association's (SLRA) office by a man he had met in the mosque. He was timid, scared, and had no idea what to do to resolve his situation. SLRA immediately made a safeguarding referral to the local authority, requesting that a full and proper age assessment be carried out. They found him a community care solicitor in order to put pressure on the local authority to fulfil their legal duty. Eventually the local authority agreed to conduct a full age assessment and to treat him as a looked after child in the interim. They moved him to accommodation which was suitable for a 16 year old, and he now had the necessary support from a key worker and social worker. Now that J is receiving the proper care, his mental and physical health has greatly improved. He receives daily support at his accommodation and has been able to make friends with young people his own age. SLRA has provided him with a laptop, which means that he is able to access ESOL classes and a youth group online. He has started college. From being frightened, lonely and distressed in unsuitable accommodation, he now has friends and opportunity.

On the Front Line – Case Studies from the projects we help

WS and her five year old daughter had been through harrowing trauma, including severe domestic violence, a period of street homelessness in London, and extreme deprivation as a result of unresolved immigration issues.

Hackney Migrant Centre was able to provide supermarket vouchers and mobile credit to support them, while also ensuring that they were referred to an immigration solicitor who is working on resolving their immigration issues to find a route out of their destitution and insecurity.

L came to Croydon Refugee Day Centre (CRDC) as an asylum-seeker.

She received leave to remain a few months ago, and returned to CRDC desperate because she didn't understand the systems, had no food and was very hungry. She was also very lonely. CRDC supplied emergency food parcels, but also worked with her to access their other services for social and wellbeing activities. She was delighted to make a human connection and be welcomed to these other activities. CRDC is continuing to support her to access services more effectively so that she does not end up feeling so alone again.

N, a pregnant mother arrived from Iraq in October 2022 with her three other children, speaking Kurdish Sorani.

Happy Baby Community (HBC) supported her with the birth of her twins, and the care of her three other children. The hotel food consisted of white bread and margarine for breakfast, pasta or rice for lunch, and vegetable rice for dinner. N was desperate for fresh fruit and vegetables, and her health and that of her babies and children depended on her having a healthy diet. HBC provided her with a huge weekly bag of fruit and vegetables such as oranges, avocados, tomatoes, mango and salad that she was able to store in her room (she had no access to cooking facilities). Thanks to food charities, they also accessed wholemeal bread, baby food, smoothies, and cereal bars that were high in protein suitable for the children. Ms N and her children are now managing to get by, and join the group every week.

London
Churches
Refugee
Fund

**LONDON CHURCHES
REFUGEE FUND**

**Annual Speaker
Meeting**

Tuesday June 4th @ 6.30 pm

**Revd Dr Inderjit
Bhogal**

*Founder and President of
City of Sanctuary*

**“Church of Sanctuary:
Churches engaging with Refugees”**

(Plus: speakers from some of the frontline charities
supported by the London Churches Refugee Fund)

Email: info@lcrf.org.uk Website: lcrf.org.uk

**Bloomsbury Central Baptist Church
235 Shaftesbury Avenue WC2H 8EP
STARTS 6.30pm f/b meet & greet over refreshments**

Flyer for LCRF's
2024 Annual Speaker Meeting

Refugees and asylum seekers: the human costs and benefits

“For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me” (Mt 25:35-36). These words are a constant admonition to see in the migrant not simply a brother or sister in difficulty, but Christ himself, who knocks at our door.” Pope Francis

The last year has witnessed many more conflicts and increasing violence around the world, ethnic, political and religious discrimination and persecution, as well as devastating impacts of climate change such as water shortages, failed harvests from weather change, floods and desertification. Last year there were 27.1 million refugees of whom 41% are children who were forcibly displaced across the world, and the vast majority of them sought sanctuary in the poorest countries of the world. In total, the UK is home to just 1% of all refugees worldwide. The media, social media, politicians and other commentators have tended to reduce the plight and suffering of those who flee, to statistics or criminalise them rather than the victims of circumstances not of their own making.

The Home Office figures for 2023, state that 7,004 of the 30,000 people who sought refuge in the UK were referred as potential victims of modern slavery showing the reality and the scale of people who are trapped in exploitative situations, threats, violence and intimidation, apart from all those fleeing conflict. Each has a story to tell and a life, home, family or livelihood destroyed. The human cost for refugees is immense: loneliness, despair, mental and physical dislocation. For children and young people it usually means an end to education and a productive and positive future. All hope for most of them is lost.

While we have a reasonable record with regard to immigration (1.2m last year), UK policies towards refugees and asylum seekers have become increasingly harsh and more restrictive, based on the conventional view that the refugee is a burden on society, and is focussed on how we can prevent people from coming here, turn them away at sea or our borders, make life here so harsh in unsafe accommodation, inappropriate food, locked in compounds or cells or incarcerated in ships, and treated as criminals, that they suffer a second trauma. The government has passed the Illegal Migration Act into law. This will prevent most people fleeing war and persecution from claiming asylum in the UK, including when they are from places where we know people are likely to have reasons to flee, such as Afghanistan, Syria and Sudan.

The Europe-wide Coalition against Inhumanity of some 80 NGOs launched a campaign to stop the Inhumanity at Europe's Borders including those who come in small boats across the sea. There are limited safe ways for people to seek asylum in the UK and more people than previously are waiting over a year for an initial decision on their claim. Even newly recognised refugees are struggling after successfully applying for asylum. Many can't move from asylum support to mainstream benefits and employment within the 28-day period given to them by the Home Office. This year the period given them to move out of their asylum accommodation has been reduced to seven days. This is leading to devastating levels of destitution. The Rwanda policy, even if it gets through Parliament will not reduce the numbers or deter desperate people, because they have no other realistic options.

But we can challenge the conventional view. By allowing them to stay and work they can add to the wealth of our country and contribute taxes and not be a burden. Refugees bring many skills and expertise and a commitment to work. For example, about 1,200 medically qualified and experienced refugees both general practitioners and specialists, are registered with the British Medical Association. It is estimated that it costs around £25,000 to support a refugee doctor to practise in the UK. Training a new doctor costs between £200,000 and £250,000.

Refugees and asylum seekers: the human costs and benefits

We are desperately short of doctors and cannot wait the several years it takes to train new doctors or for them to gain experience. Many of the refugees have worked in agriculture all their lives and we urgently need agricultural workers for our farms. Others bring other skills and experience we urgently need to turn around our economy. Accepting refugees is a win for the UK and the communities that host them, not only for the refugee. By providing them with the right to work, to health, and to education, refugees can start building new lives here in the UK. The faster they can integrate into the labour force, the faster they can become productive members of society and contribute to the UK.

Nationally, the refugee organisations are advocating for a good humane asylum policy, compliant with our international obligations and common humanity as well as human rights. These include:

- Uphold access to the asylum system by considering all claims, no matter how someone arrives in the UK.
- Expand existing safe routes, such as family reunion, and pilot new ones, such as humanitarian visas.
- Roll out a more efficient process for making asylum decisions so that decisions are made swiftly and are right the first time
- Safe homes and by Providing the right support people need while waiting for an asylum decision, and after a decision, to recover and rebuild their lives.
- Improve support in the UK for refugees and people seeking asylum so they can engage effectively with the process, and for those who stay, integrate and contribute to society.

There are an increasing number of people who recognise that we can benefit from these refugees if we welcome them and integrate them into our communities. Welcoming people from other countries strengthens our own communities by making them more diverse, tolerant and flexible in our fast-changing world. Some of the most inspiring and influential people in the arts, science, politics and technology came originally as refugees, asylum seekers or migrants. Our partner front line refugee services are playing a wonderful compassionate Christian role in supporting them and helping them integrate into our communities.

The London Churches Refugee Fund exists to contribute to helping them support destitute refugees and asylum seekers and we are enabled to do this by the generous donations of many churches and Christians across London. As Christians, we are enjoined by Christ to welcome the stranger and support the vulnerable. The Pope and all the key Church Leaders remind us of our obligation laid on us to see Christ in the refugees and to treat strangers with dignity and hospitality.

'I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me. Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.'

Matthew 25 vs40



'Reclining Nativity'

One of LCRF's Christmas cards this year
Designed by artist Cathy Young

Trustee Review of the Year

2023 saw trustees move their meetings from the kitchen table at the home of Chris Brice to the office of Matthew Lloyd in Shoreditch with access to more modern technology but still with the benefit of cake from the host!

During 2023 we had nine business meetings reflecting our efforts on succession planning as the founding trustees begin to step back to allow new trustees to carry the charity forward. As part of a review of our goals at the end of 2022 and the beginning of 2023, aided by input from Jack Brooks, we are aiming for a trustee body of ten people. However, in 2023 we had to say goodbye to John Murphy, Roxane Liddell and Maggie Hindley. We thank them for their years of service to LCRF which has been blessed by their wise counsels. We have been joined by Matthew Lloyd and Simon Loveitt who have both had useful previous experience in running charitable projects and so were able to 'hit the ground running' as new trustees. We hope that in 2024 we will be able to recruit additional trustees so that the tasks can be shared and particularly that the burden shouldered by Chris Brice as Chair can be reduced.

We continue to have the assistance of volunteers: Palissa Ose-Owusu, looking after our social media and Clement and Anita Francis, who have used their technical skills to ensure that our communications and website are kept up to date. We really appreciate all they do as they keep those of us who are retired aware of how we can improve how we work to become more effective. The 2023 Speaker Meeting on the theme 'Love the Stranger' was held at the Church of the Immaculate Conception led by Bishop Paul McAleen and Bishop John Perumbalath with a lively reception afterwards with some wonderful music.

As we have no paid staff, all that we do is dependent on our trustees and volunteers. The job of arranging the two rounds of grant applications has been ably organised by Gillian Dare, assisted by Robina Rafferty. Our Honorary Treasurer, Dave Bond, has provided us with clear and accurate accounts and facilitated prompt payments to the groups that we have been able to support.



LCRF Trustee meeting

A major part of the fundraising undertaken by the trustees is the sale of Christmas cards and welcome gifts. This year our online sales plummeted, but we still managed to sell virtually all of the 5000 cards, thanks mainly to the efforts of Chris Brice at churches in his part of north London. We were once again pleased to offer a card using a painting by Cathy Young and another by a refugee, Mehri from Iran. Thank you to both artists. Our other effort is our annual carol-singing event which this year took place at a very cold Highbury and Islington Station forecourt. Friday 6 December 2024 is already in the calendar for carol singing, but details have not been finalised so please await news nearer the time!

• Where our money came from:

Foundation Donors	£17,274
Single donations	£17,147
Carol singing collections	£1,305
HMRC Gift Aid	£7,823
Card/print sales	£3,104

Income received this year = £59,530

• Where our money went to:

Grants	£53,400
Administration	£750
Cards - printing/postage	£635

Grants given away this year = £54,785

LCRF bank balance at the start of the year: £35,174

LCRF bank balance at the end of the year: £39,919

LONDON CHURCHES REFUGEE FUND

RECEIPTS and PAYMENTS Account for the year ended 31st December 2023		
RECEIPTS		
Donations		48,603.28
HMRC reimbursements		7,822.59
Sales of Christmas cards		3,104.32
TOTAL RECEIPTS		59,530.19
PAYMENTS		
Grants		
Action for Refugees in Lewisham (AFRIL)	1,900.00	
African Refugee Community	1,900.00	
Babylon Migrants Project	500.00	
Baobab Centre for Young Survivors in Exile	1,900.00	
British Refugee Council	1,000.00	
C4WS Homeless Project	900.00	
CARAS	1,200.00	
Care4Calais	900.00	
Christ Church Feltham	500.00	
Citizens of the World Choir	1,900.00	
Cotton Tree Trust	1,900.00	
Croydon Refugee Day Centre	1,900.00	
Dost Centre for Young Refugees and Migrants	1,900.00	
Freedom from Torture	1,000.00	
Hackney Migrant Support Centre	1,000.00	
Happy Baby Community	1,900.00	
Haringey Migrant Support Centre	900.00	
Hope for the Young	1,000.00	
Housing Justice	1,900.00	
Islington Centre for Refugees and Migrants	1,900.00	
Jesuit Refugee Service	1,900.00	
Jewish Council for Racial Equality (JCORE)	1,900.00	
LEWCAS	1,900.00	
Lewisham Refugee and Migrant Network	900.00	
Migrant Voice	1,000.00	
Migrants Organise	1,000.00	
New Citizens' Gateway	1,000.00	
New North London Synagogue Destitute Asylum Seekers Drop-In	1,900.00	
Notre Dame Refugee Centre	1,900.00	
Room to Heal	1,900.00	
Samphire	900.00	
Shrimad Rajchandra Mission	300.00	
South London Refugee Association	900.00	
St James' Church Piccadilly	900.00	
St Martin-in-the-Fields Trust	900.00	
Union Chapel	1,000.00	
Waging Peace	1,900.00	
Waltham Forest Migrant Action	600.00	
West London Welcome	900.00	
Women against Rape	1,900.00	
		53,400.00
Administration		749.81
Christmas cards - production and distribution costs		635.64
TOTAL PAYMENTS		54,785.45
RECEIPTS less PAYMENTS for the year ended 31st December 2023		4,744.74

STATEMENT OF ASSETS AND LIABILITIES as at 31st December 2023		
ASSETS		
Bank Balance		
Co-operative Bank Community Directplus Account		39,919.00
TOTAL ASSETS		39,919.00
TOTAL LIABILITIES		0.00
ASSETS less LIABILITIES		39,919.00
GENERAL FUND		
Balance brought forward 1st January 2023		35,174.26
Receipts less Payments in 2023		4,744.74
Balance carried forward 31st December 2023		39,919.00

Independent Examiner's Report to the trustees of London Churches Refugee Fund.

Charity Number: 1121108

On accounts for the year ended 31st December 2023

Set out on the preceding page.

I report to the trustees on my examination of the accounts of the above charity ("the Trust") for the year ended 31st December 2023.

Responsibilities and basis of report.

As the charity trustees of the Trust, you are responsible for the preparation of the accounts in accordance with the requirements of the Charities Act 2011 ("the Act")

I report in respect of my examination of the Trust's accounts carried out under section 145 of the 2011 Act and in carrying out my examination, I have followed the applicable Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the Act.

Independent examiner's statement.

I have completed my examination. I confirm that no material matters have come to my attention in connection with the examination which gives me cause to believe that in, any material respect:

- Accounting records were not kept in accordance with section 130 of the Act or
- the accounts do not accord with the accounting records

I have no concerns and have come across no other matters in connection with the examination to which attention should be drawn in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

Signed: 20th



ould

March 2024

Michael John G

32 Elm Avenue, Upminster, Essex, RM14 2AY