



## Annual Report

October 2022 – September 2023



Refugee Week Stall,  
Lewes Precinct



Top: Protesting the Illegal  
Migration Act in  
Parliament Square.



Al giving a presentation at  
Priory School

Above  
Protesting the use of  
Hotels for UASCs,  
Brighton Town Hall

## **LOSRRAS aims to promote the welfare of refugees and people seeking asylum in and beyond the Lewes District by:**

- **Raising awareness of issues relating to refugees and those seeking asylum**
- **providing practical help and responding to local issues as they arise**
- **advocating and lobbying to improve the rights of refugees and people seeking asylum**

**The group initially met in January 2002 for anyone interested in the issues of migration, asylum and safe refuge from a perspective of human rights and civic responsibilities.**

**LOSRRAS became a charity and adopted its new name in October 2017. Membership is open to all who share these aims, irrespective of political affiliation or personal beliefs..**

### **Overview of the year**

#### **Low points:**

- The government-fuelled hostility to refugees and people seeking asylum becomes even more entrenched with the passing of the Illegal Migration Act (July 2023) which removes the right of anyone arriving in the UK through so-called irregular means to apply for asylum (see April newsletter).
- The proposed use of wholly inappropriate and dangerous facilities such as the Bibby Stockholm barge in Portland, Dorset to house recent arrivals.
- The increasing backlog of asylum claims – currently over 175,000 as of August 2023.
- The policy of deportation of refugees to Rwanda, despite opposition in the House of Lords, continues to be proposed by the government and is pending a decision in the Supreme Court in late September.
- Russia's invasion of Ukraine continues to cause massive distress, displacement and disruption to the lives of Ukrainians. The UK government's Homes for Ukraine (HfU) scheme continues to provide support but a shortage of affordable accommodation is a critical issue for those temporarily settled in the Lewes district.
- Those Afghan refugees who were evacuated to the UK in 2021 are now being forced out of their temporary hotel accommodation; and because the government have reneged on their commitment to resettle Afghans through safe and legal routes, increasing numbers are now found to be arriving by small boat.
- Despite government policy to prevent small boat crossings, the numbers for 2023 show no sign of reducing, and tragic and avoidable deaths at sea are a brutal indicator of the necessity for safe and legal routes.
- Removal of cartoons at Kent Children's Intake Centre provokes a huge backlash and represents the depths of brutality to which this government is prepared to sink.

#### **High points:**

- Despite our small numbers and voluntary capacity, we continue to fight for the rights of refugees and people seeking asylum by consolidating our activities and widening our reach with local organisations such as the Lewes District Anti-Racism Alliance.
- Our core activities continue. We have welcomed two new families into the District in addition to those we already support.
- The Foreign National Visitors Scheme at Lewes Prison has consolidated with eleven volunteers now committed to visiting to cope with increasing demand for support.

- We supplied a full set of clothes and shoes for 70 people seeking asylum in Hailsham with the generous support of the membership and local organisations. The unmet needs of this group of men will continue to be a priority.
- Our outreach work in local schools has expanded to include storytelling activities in local primary schools.
- We continue our involvement with the HfU scheme and Ukrainian families in the Lewes district, particularly with ESOL needs, and a second smaller ESCC grant will allow us to tailor this further.
- A very successful walk in Lewes in May drew 70 people, of whom 27 were people seeking asylum, from Eastbourne - all walked, talked and picnicked together – a definite high point!
- We launched our new website which has greatly increased our accessibility to those needing our information and advice.

### **Month by month...**

**October:** 20th anniversary celebration of LOSRAS

**November:** Priory School outreach work with all Year 8 students.

LOSRAS stall at Lewes Labour Party open discussion event.

**December:** Website development

**January:** Protest meeting in Brighton about the missing Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASCs) from a hotel in Brighton.

Holocaust Memorial Day vigil and events in Lewes.

**February:** Launch of the new LOSRAS web site

**March:** LOSRAS members kindly donate phones, games, toiletries and stationery for the asylum-seeking men being accommodated in a hotel in Hailsham.

With 3VA, Eastbourne Network and advice from the hotel staff, we organise the purchase and distribution of a full set of clothes including coats and footwear for each of the 70 men. This could not have been achieved without our members' generous donations and funding.

Open Meeting with Florence Grover (formerly of 3VA) on 'Boats, borders and barracks: an insight into the arrival process for refugees in Kent' and Lilian and James who discussed the support to young people provided at Enthum House, Eastbourne.

Anti-Racism Alliance protest rally in Newhaven to mark UN Anti-Racism Day and to protest the Illegal Migration Bill.

Rally in Parliament Square to oppose the Illegal Migration Bill.

Little Amal, the Syrian puppet who symbolises all child refugees, comes to Brighton!

**May:** Successful fund-raising plant sale at the Linklater Pavilion.

LOSRAS organised two, simultaneous walks around Lewes which attracted 70 participants including 27 people seeking asylum who came from hotels in Eastbourne with the volunteers from the Sanctuary Café, Eastbourne. The walks culminated in a very jolly, shared picnic - with food provided by LOSRAS in The Grange Gardens.

**June:** Refugee Week screening of Thomas Laurance's 'On Our Doorstep' at the Depot, with LOSRAS co-chairs on the Q&A panel.

Open Meeting held at the Depot showing 'Matar' and 'The Making of Matar'; with speaker Naqeeb Saide.

Protest about the repeated threat of housing UASCs in hotels in Brighton.



**Precinct stall with the Anti-Racism Alliance to mark Refugee Week and voice our opposition to the Illegal Migration Bill.**

**Storytelling and assemblies at two local primary schools.**

**July: LOSRAS members participated in the annual Refugee Tales Walk.**

**August: Successful collection of clothes, shoes and boots for recent arrivals being detained at Gatwick.**

**September: LOSRAS stall at the Lewes Societies Fair.**

## **Local support work**

Our work with families in the Lewes District continues. Families are more established but ESOL, homework tutoring, and general support continues to be provided to twelve families (nearly 60 people across the district). Two new families recently arrived have been paired with volunteers. We have 30 active volunteers, but more are always needed - do get in touch via the website if you would like to help.

**Homes for Ukraine (HfU):** LOSRAS was invited to apply for a grant under the Homes for Ukraine scheme by the County Council for the 2022/2023 year which was used to provide extensive ESOL support. It also gave us the opportunity to re-vamp the website and, in particular, provide information for Ukrainian hosts and guests. We also funded through this grant, partner organisation across the District e.g. Lewes for Ukraine, Seaford for Ukraine and the Hillcrest Centre in Newhaven to provide further support.

We have received a further smaller grant for 2023/2024 (see funding below) to continue providing support to guests under the HfU scheme with our main focus being ESOL lessons and/or one-to-one tuition.

Many Ukrainians guests have moved out of host accommodation and are being supported by the County Council into alternative accommodation, however there is still a need for more hosts. Ukrainian guests receive considerable support from the County Council in respect of housing, employment, children's activities so we focus on ESOL support and liaising with partner organisations.

**Foreign National Visitors scheme at Lewes prison** continues to develop strategies to meet the needs of foreign national prisoners. Over the year we have visited approximately 40 prisoners facing potential deportation – some are one-off visits, others are ongoing. We work in partnership with the Migration Law Clinic at Sussex University when we need to signpost prisoners for Immigration legal advice, and have been helped by the library service at the prison to set up a monthly drop-in provision in the more relaxed library environment. The constant seemingly random movement of prisoners around the prison estate, coupled with the near impossibility of obtaining publicly funded legal representation limit the effectiveness of our work in the prison. Despite the frustrations, visits do seem to make a real difference and we are usually warmly received by those we see.

## **Awareness raising**

We now have an accessible and up-to-date website, and we continue to provide regular newsletters, hold open meetings and run the Refugee Week stall in Lewes Precinct and at other, relevant events.

Priory School sessions are well received by children and staff, and we hold assemblies in two local primary schools about refugee issues during Refugee Week.

## Advocacy and lobbying for change

### **LOSRRAS continues to work with key national campaigns:**

Our focus this year has been in campaigning against the Illegal Migration Act which received Royal Assent in July. In many ways, this campaigning has subsumed the separate campaigns that we have traditionally been involved in, namely:

**Lift the Ban** - we continue to campaign for the right to work of those waiting for asylum claims to be processed.

**Safe Passage** - the Illegal Migration Act makes it almost impossible for families to be reunited and so we continue to campaign for UASCs to be legally entitled to reunite with family and for Afghan families to be given safe and legal routes.

**Campaign against the rising use of detention** without a time limit.

We continue to be part of the **Lewes District Anti-Racism Alliance** which aims to raise awareness and promote racial justice within the district.

### Funding

The short-term grant from ESCC to support the Home for Ukraine scheme which allowed us to modernise our website and organise an efficient ESOL programme of support to Ukrainians living locally has been extended to provide continuity of support and to develop education outreach work. However, our funds typically come from membership subscriptions, donations, (we gain significant funds via Gift Aid) and fund-raising. The annual plant sale, always a colourful and well-attended event, raised over £900! We are immensely grateful for the continued support and generosity of the membership.

### Thanks

LOSRRAS trustees would like to express our wholehearted thanks and gratitude to:

Michael Munday; Jane Andrew; Nick Bodimeade; Gill Lipson; Jean Gould; Val Simanowitz; Rachel Cole; Heide Chaffe; James Golding of Michael Bell One; Carmen Slijpen; Steve Lewis; Jane Foot; Tony Downmunt; Chris Burgess, and Jan Morgan.

To all our volunteers, our thanks for your continued commitment to the families and individuals you support. We are grateful for our volunteer prison visitors who take on this challenging work, and also for the support of Will McCready at Sussex University. Thanks also to Lewes Holocaust Memorial Day Group; Staverton Nursery; Goldcliff Garden Centre; Sanctuary Cafe Eastbourne; Lewes Society of Friends; Le Bureau; South Downs College; Linklater Pavilion; Depot; Christ Church; Lewes Town Council; and ESCC.

### Members

LOSRRAS ended the year with 20 new members bringing the membership to over 200 people and seven affiliated organisations.

# LOSRA

## Financial statement for the year ended 31<sup>st</sup> August 2023

	<b>2023</b>		2022	
	£	£	£	£
<b>INCOME</b>				
Subscriptions	<b>1,634</b>		1,323	
Donations - personal	<b>7,528</b>		7,373	
- corporate	<b>3,000</b>		1,500	
HMRC Gift Aid	<b>1,628</b>		1,035	
Plant sale	<b>928</b>		1,292	
Open gardens	-		1,100	
Homes for Ukraine grant	<b><u>5,000</u></b>		<u>14,160</u>	
		<b>19,718</b>		27,783
<b>LESS: EXPENDITURE</b>				
Grants to:				
Organisations (as attached)	<b>6,650</b>		5,000	
Families and individuals	<b>2,314</b>		3,602	
Insurance, printing, phone, etc	<b>1,190</b>		1,301	
H4U - Coordination	<b>1,615</b>		496	
- Teaching materials, etc	<b>6,255</b>		249	
- Web design, etc	<b>5,980</b>		-	
- Volunteers expenses, etc	<b>1,577</b>		-	
Prison visiting expenses	<b>451</b>		-	
Speakers' expenses, etc.	<b><u>260</u></b>		<u>418</u>	
		<b><u>26,292</u></b>		<u>11,066</u>

Excess of expenditure over income		<b>(6,574)</b>		-
Excess of income over expenditure		-		16,717
Bank balance at 1 September <b>2022/21</b>		<b>20,532</b>		3,815
Bank balance at 31 August <b>2023/22</b>		<b>13,958</b>		20,532
Being: General funds		<b>10,800</b>		7,117
Restricted funds (H4U)		<b>3,158</b>		13,415

Tony Sims – Honorary Treasurer

5th September 2023

Checked and confirmed correct by Heide Chaffey

14th September 2023