



Refugee Advocacy, Information and Support (RAIS Lancaster)
Trustees' Annual Report and Financial Statements for the period
1st April 2022 to 31st March 2023

Reference and Administrative Details

For The Year Ended 31 March 2023

Charity Name: Refugee Advocacy Information & Support, Lancaster CIO

Charity Name the charity uses: RAIS Lancaster

Registered Charity Number: 1193811

Charity's Principal Address: RAIS Lancaster, The Cornerstone, Sulyard St, Lancaster LA1 1PX

Website www.rais.org.uk

List of Trustees

Trustee name	Office (if any)	Dates acted if not for whole year	Name of person (or body) entitled to appoint trustee (if any)
Dr Elizabeth Hare	Chair		Re-elected at AGM
Andrew Nicholson	Staff line manager	August 2022	Re-elected at AGM
Kate Tordoff	Housing and benefits coordinator		Re-elected at AGM
Anas Radwan	Refugee liaison	August 2022	Elected at AGM
Ruth Colbridge	Publicity and fund raising	Co-opted October 2022	Board of trustees
Stephen Thomas	Financial management	Co-opted December 2022	Board of trustees

Other support from volunteers

Dr Pat Allen (Treasurer)

Clive Shaw (Minutes Secretary)

Islay Watson (Admin support)

Carmel Cheshire (Accounting support)

RAIS Lancaster is a Charitable Incorporated Organisation, Registered Charity no. 1193811

Date: July 2023

1. Objectives and Activities

1.1 Introduction

This report seeks to summarise the work carried out by RAIS Lancaster in the year April 2022 to March 2023.

Our governing document sets out that our charitable purpose for the public benefit is to work to alleviate poverty and assist in the progress and integration of asylum seekers and refugees in the Lancaster and Morecambe area.

Our core activities comprise five drop-ins per week in Lancaster and Morecambe. Since the arrival of more 280 asylum seekers in the area June 2022, our workload has significantly increased. The drop-ins are run by paid staff and volunteers.

Alongside this core activity we continue to provide a helpline four mornings a week and accompany our clients to appointments and where appropriate refer and advocate for them with other agencies. We also continue to provide funds to help with transport and other welfare costs.

1.2 Public benefit

The trustees have had regard to the guidance issued by the Charity Commission on public benefit. In order to demonstrate this, we outline our main activities in support of our beneficiaries below and confirm that these do not give rise to personal benefit to trustees, volunteers, donors or supporters, but are solely to provide relief to asylum seekers, refugees and their dependants.

1.3 Summary of achievements and performance

In the year to 31st March 2023, the RAIS drop-in dealt with 1292 enquiries from 267 separate individuals. This represents a 105% increase in the number of service users (from 130 in 2021-22). The number of enquiries (i.e. drop-in visits) was up 103% (from 635 in 2021-22). Chart 1 shows the number of enquiries dealt with each month (note: drop-in sessions were not held in August; instead, urgent enquiries were dealt with by appointment).

There were two events which drove this significant increase in the work of the charity. In July 2022 the Home office brought 220 asylum seekers to initial accommodation in a hotel in Lancaster and then In September 2022 a second hotel was opened in Morecambe to accommodate a further 80 asylum seekers. Then in early 2023 the Home Office had announced the release of Asylum Claim Questionnaires allowing a fast-track processing of cases for asylum seekers from specific countries. In response, Over the course of the year RAIS has increased its provision of drop-ins from 2 to 5 each week and now provides asylum support in Morecambe as well as Lancaster.

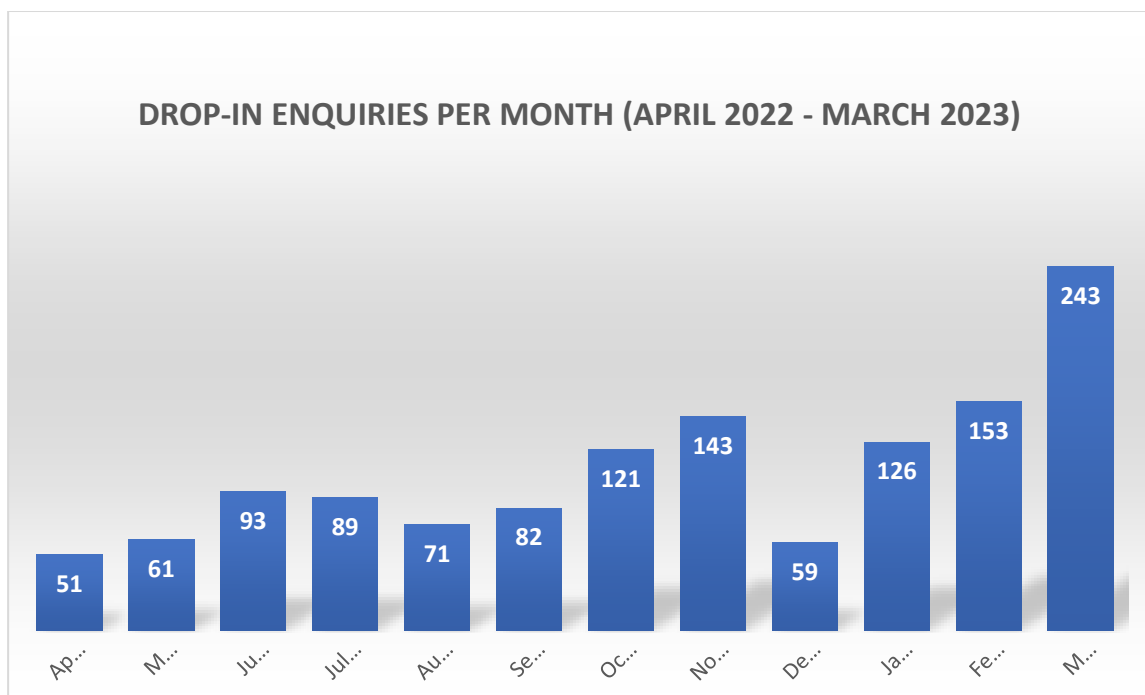


Chart 1

Female clients, with 79 enquiries, made up 6.1% of the total 1292 enquiries and male clients, with 1213 enquiries, made up 93.9% of the total enquiries. This large difference is due to the fact that the hotels house only male asylum seekers.

Of the 267 enquirers at the drop-in, 66 were asylum seekers living in shared houses, 81 were from the hotel in Lancaster, 61 were from the hotel in Morecambe, and 59 were refugees. A number of individuals and families whose initial contact with RAIS was as asylum seekers have been given leave to remain, i.e. refugee status, in the UK.

While some people come with one-off enquiries, others return several times, and yet others require ongoing support over a period of weeks, as shown in Chart 2. The average number of visits per service user was 4.8, a very small decrease from 4.9 in 2021, meaning that the provision of support for each person on average has continued at the same level as before despite the higher number of clients.

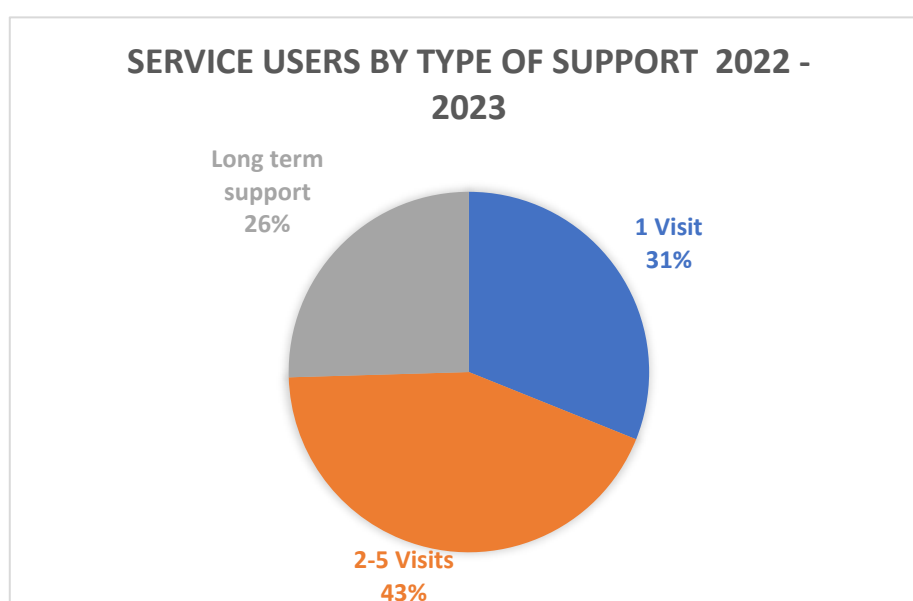


Chart 2

Enquiries cover a wide range of issues: Chart 3 shows initial enquiries broken down by type. It can be seen that the largest category is requests for asylum support (416 enquiries in 2022 compared with 83 in 2021; a 403% increase). ‘Asylum support’ includes everything from helping to understand correspondence from the Home Office or lawyers, requesting documents and ID from the Home Office, applying for the financial support they are entitled to, and accompanying people to Home Office interviews or appeal tribunals. Other large categories are transport and bus/rail fares, referrals to lawyers, housing, and accessing healthcare.

We have had enquiries from people from 37 different countries (and 12 clients whose country of origin isn’t recorded¹), up from 12 countries in 2021. These are shown in Table 1 on page 7. The largest groups (in size order) were Iran, Iraq, Afghanistan, and Eritrea.

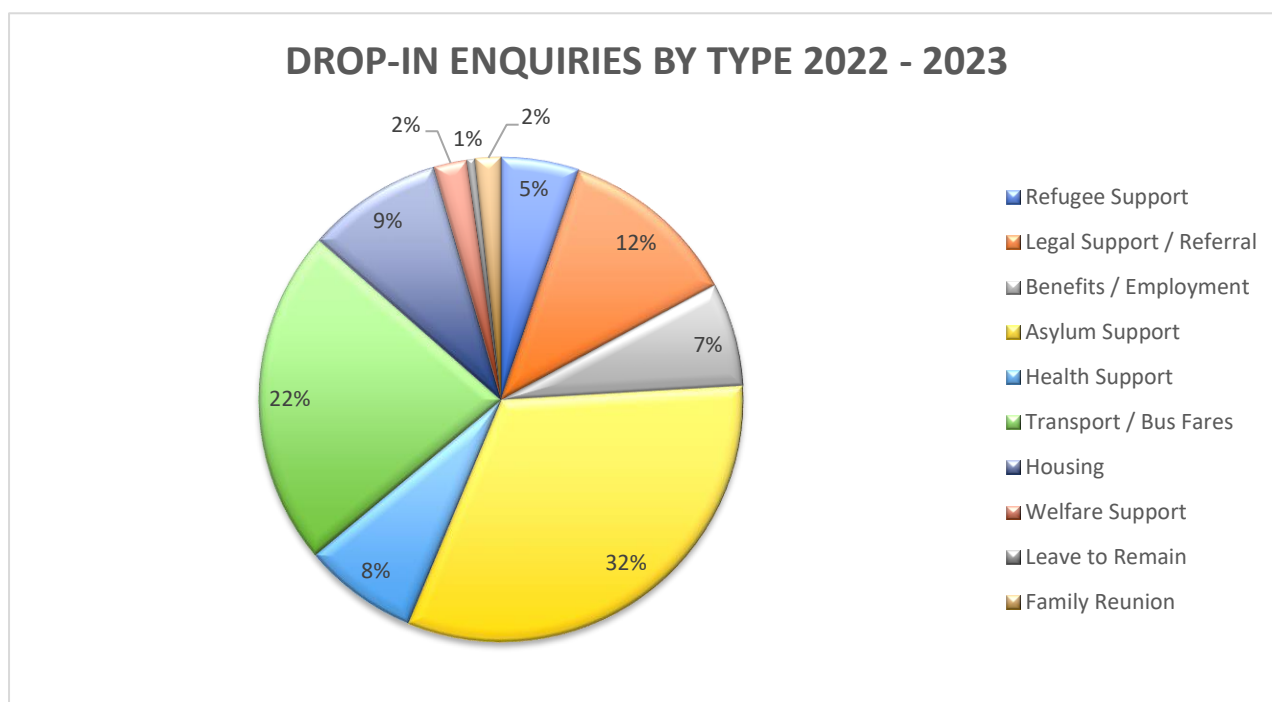


Chart 3

1.4 Trustees

During the year we co-opted two new trustees to our board: Lancaster City Councillor Ruth Colbridge who is responsible for communications, social media and publicity and supervising fund raising activities, and Stephen Thomas who comes from a business background and has taken on the management of the charity’s finances. Anas Radwan is a trustee with lived experience of the asylum and refugee process and who works to get feedback from our clients on their experience of our services. This brings our number up to six overall. At the forthcoming AGM and over the next few months we hope to recruit an additional two trustees as we are very aware of the increased workload as a result of the recent influx of new clients. Going forward to next year the Board will conduct a governance review and update and review its safeguarding policy which is now due.

¹ Where the country of origin is not recorded it is because the client had usually been in the UK for some years and did not wish to refer back to their original arrival.

Country of Origin	No.	Country of Origin	No.
Iran	68	Namibia	5
Eritrea	27	Kenya	1
Afghanistan	30	Thailand	1
Syria	14	Nicaragua	1
Tunisia	1	Gambia	1
Sudan	16	Pakistan	2
Niger	1	DRC	2
Ethiopia	14	Algeria	1
Iraq	29	Somalia	1
Egypt	2	Nigeria	4
Kuwait	3	Ukraine	2
Turkey	2	Morocco	1
Saudi Arabia	3	Yemen	2
El Salvador	8	Lebanon	1
Hong Kong	2	Palestine	1
Spain	3	Germany	1
Ecuador	2	China	1
Not Recorded	12	Chad	1
Phillippines	1	Total	267

Table 1

2. Additional information

2.1. Changes to and expansion of work

Over the last year the workload for the charity has both increased and changed. In July the charity established a collaboration with St Thomas Church Lancaster to provide an extra drop-in at the church centre which is close to the hotel.

In September we established further collaborations and started a drop-in at the Bare Methodist Church Hall in Morecambe and another one at the Memorial Hall in Morecambe to respond to the needs of the growing population of asylum seekers and refugees there. The population of both hotels shifts as people come and go and both drop-ins continue to be busy.

The recent introduction of a fast-track questionnaire for asylum seekers from particular countries to speed up the decision process, has further increased our work and in particular the need to accompany people to lawyers and arrange extensions for completing the questionnaires. The consequence of completion of the questionnaires will be

more people getting leave to remain, and therefore we anticipate a shift away from asylum support (although that will continue) towards helping new refugees as they start the process of integration into the wider community.

In September of 2022 we appointed a second paid worker (20 hours per week) to lead the service in Morecambe and to support volunteers helping refugees address some of the issue arising from the current cost of living crisis.

2.2. Wider benefits, integration etc.

The wider public benefit aspect of our work takes a number of different forms. Firstly, we proactively recruit and train members of the local community to become our volunteers. This group includes a wide age range and people from very different backgrounds as well as refugees who have lived experience of the asylum and refugee process. Our volunteers carry out the face-to-face work with clients and through this gain invaluable experience of the reality of people's lives and develop a range of skills to deal with their complex needs.

Our core activities take place in a busy, thriving city centre community centre and our presence there provides an opportunity for the general public to share the centre with our clients and helps to break down barriers and prejudices. The other three drop-ins take place in church halls and include a social element with members of the local community coming along to share refreshments and activities promoting English conversation and lessons alongside our services available in an informal and relaxed setting.

At the present time we are conducting a campaign called 'Changing the Conversation' which was initiated by our volunteers. We give talks and hold discussions with church and community groups to respond to their questions about the particular situation of asylum seekers and refugees and address their concerns by offering factual information and opportunities for discussion.

2.3. The contribution made by volunteer staff

RAIS Lancaster has two employees and six trustees, and we serve potentially 600 clients, over a large area around Lancaster and Morecambe. Our volunteer staff are essential and invaluable. Without them, we cannot function. We currently have 30 active volunteers. Some have worked with us for many years, whilst several have joined over the past nine months. Some are retired people, others are students, and others again maintain a commitment to RAIS alongside part-time work. Volunteers work primarily in two ways: at our drop-in sessions and in our office.

2.3.1 Drop-in support

This year we have been even busier than previously, and so the number of sessions has increased significantly. Our current programme runs on Monday mornings in Morecambe, Monday afternoons in Lancaster, Wednesday afternoons in Lancaster, Thursday afternoons in Lancaster, Friday afternoons in Morecambe. At drop-in sessions volunteers help clients with:

- Certain disbursements from our Welfare Fund.
- Help with accessing health services.
- Access to clothing and toiletries.
- Signposting to further support from partner charities and other agencies.
- Arranging to accompany clients to appointments with solicitors and the Home Office as well as local medical appointments.

Volunteers also do a lot of the accompanying, often to Manchester or Liverpool.

2.3.2 Office support

All our drop-in support generates a great deal of follow-up work. Again, volunteer staff do much of this essential work including:

- Liaison with solicitors and legal services.
- Contact with the Home Office on a range of topics.

- Access to food banks, food clubs and other support with the cost-of-living crisis.
- Access to education for adults and children.

We are also grateful to three volunteers who offer additional, clerical support to update client records, clerk for our trustees and administer proper financial management of our budget.

2.4 Training Programme

We have worked hard this year to provide a comprehensive training programme to support volunteer, trustees, and employees. As well as hands-on, on-the-job training RAIS has run sessions throughout the year on *Understanding the Asylum Process, Developing Good Listening Skills, Understanding Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking, Supporting our LGBTQ+ Community, Poverty Relief, Safeguarding, and Supporting Women in our Community*. We have also welcomed members of our partner organisations at our training events, and we are grateful for the invitations we have received to join partners at events they have organised.

3. Objectives

3.1. Response to objectives for last year

1. We have applied for and received additional funding for a second paid worker and that person is now in place on a contract for 20 hours a week, funded until October 2023. We are currently waiting to hear about funding to renew the contract of our manager and to extend the second contract for the rest of the financial year. In terms of running costs and welfare our services are now secure until March 2023

2. Our volunteer numbers overall have shown a net increase of 12 to meet the needs of our expanding client base.

3. The increased client base has necessitated an increase in our range of partnerships in the city and beyond. In addition to well established partnerships with the local authority and other local support organisations we have forged new partnerships with Bare Methodist Church, St. Thomas Church Lancaster and Morecambe Parish Church, all of whom host our drop-ins, and in some cases provide free refreshments. We will continue to work in close partnership with the other refugee support organisations in the City in order to make the most of our collective resources and areas of expertise to best support asylum seekers and refugees in the city. Current partnerships and collaborations include:

East Meets West
Global Link
Bare Methodist Church
St Thomas Church
Morecambe Parish Church
Tara Centre
Collingwood Immigration Services
City of Sanctuary Lancaster
Lancashire County Council Refugee Integration Team
Lancaster University Law Department
Muslim Women's Network
Food Futures
Eggcup
Green Rose
Northwest Regional Strategic Migration Partnership

3.4 Objectives for the next year

1. To increase the number of trustees on the board to ensure the stability and the future of the charity's governance. To conduct a governance review which will include a review of our safeguarding policy (now due) and a review of our employment contracts and practices to respond to the developing needs of the organisation.
2. To conduct staff development and volunteer training to solidify and improve our skills based.

3. To continue to ensure that our services in the area are appropriate both needs of our changing client base as more people are likely to get leave to remain and therefore are focused on our core activity of advocacy information and support.
4. To seek ensure sustainable and more long term funding for the charity beyond the next financial year.

4. Financial Review

4.1 Funding policy

Given the rapid expansion of our work over the financial year in question the charity has need to expand rapidly in terms of its funding base to meet its additional needs. We are now moving towards seeking a more stable and sustainable funding base to respond the increased expenditure we anticipate as our work continues to grow over the next few years. We are also aware as an organisation of the political uncertainties that frame our particular area of work and how political decisions and events in the relatively near future may have an impact on what we do. However, we are clear from our experience of seven years in the field that while the nature of the work is likely to change and the emphasis fall on support for an increasing number of refugees, the volume of it is not likely to diminish as the community of asylum seekers and refugees is now well established in Lancaster and Morecambe and is likely to grow for the foreseeable future.

4.2 Reserves policy

The trustees have reviewed the charity's needs for reserves in line with the guidance issued by the Charity Commission. RAIS Lancaster has responsibility for the remuneration of 2 employees (a Co-ordinator and a Development worker) and the rental of Office space. The aim is to maintain a level of reserve to cover the committed expenditure during any notice period. This is considered sufficient to cover short term cash (6 weeks), notice period for all contracts. The policy is reviewed annually considering the future plans and risks of RAIS Lancaster in its setting, including the requirement to cover statutory redundancy payments after two years' contracted employment in the unlikely event of being unable to continue. Free reserves are £4,419 (2022 - £11,241).

4.3 Current financial situation

We are undertaking a range of funding applications over the next few months to secure our financial future. We are targeting the Walney Extension Fund to provide funding when the funding from The Fore ends in Autumn 2023. We have an outstanding application to Migrant Help. There are other funding opportunities which are also be targeted. Full year shows a deficit of £5824 covered by reserves. RAIS Lancaster has grown its turnover from £22806 in 2021/22 to £40081 in 2022/23, reflecting the large increase in work.

5. Structure, Governance and Management

5.1 Charity organisation

RAIS Lancaster is governed by its constitution. It is a CIO, registered with the Charity Commission on 15th March 2021.

5.2 Trustees' selection methods and requirements

Trustees are usually elected and/ or confirmed in post by membership at the AGM. Any member of RAIS Lancaster can stand as a trustee provided that they are proposed and seconded to stand by other members. Trustees can also be co-opted onto the board during the year. They are required to complete application and eligibility forms and to sign our confidentiality agreement the GDPR agreements. They are then introduced to the work of the charity by our paid workers and the Chair and given appropriate literature about their role and responsibilities as trustees. Trustees are elected for an initial term of three years after which they may stand for further election for another 3 years. There are four formal trustees' meetings year to receive quarterly accounts and discuss and approve business of the charity. During our first two years as CIO we have held meetings more frequently while we have consolidated our work. Three trustees need to be present for meeting to be quorate.

5.3. The charity's organisational structure and the wider context.

RAIS Lancaster is a member of Lancaster and Morecambe City of Sanctuary established in 2016 and led by Lancaster City Council. It comprises a network of support organisations providing different services for the ever increasing population of asylum seekers and refugees. (See partnership list in section 3.1.)

The Board of Trustees has financial and governance responsibility for the charity and a management and support role for our two paid workers who manage the day to day activity of the charity and manage, recruit, train and work alongside our volunteers.

Each of the trustees has a designated role in the charity and the paid staff are managed by a trustee.

5.4 Membership

RAIS is an Association Model CIO, which means that supporters of the Charity, including donors and volunteers, may, if they wish, become a Member of RAIS in order to keep up to date with our activities and to vote on certain matters. Only Members of the Charity may vote at our Annual General Meeting. Please refer to our Constitution, section 9, 10 and 11 for full details.

The RAIS Constitution requires only one annual meeting of its members and may occasionally have more. It may from time to time call additional meetings or invite members to participate in a consultation or planning event as appropriate. Members are updated both at formal meetings and via our newsletter. The means of communication for members is via WhatsApp, email and meetings are held either in person or on zoom.

We currently have 37 members, some of whom were supporters of RAIS before we became a CIO. The trustees recognise that welcoming a wide cross-section of our community as Membership is a means of ensuring that we are an inclusive organisation and to providing not only community support, but community understanding and empathy for our beneficiaries. The trustees have agreed a process for applying for, approving and recording Membership.

6. Thanks and Acknowledgements

Our grateful thanks are due to all our partners and to the following organisations for their support:

North Lancashire CAB
Lancaster City Housing Dept.
The Cornerstone and Lancaster Methodist Church
Bare Methodist Church
St Thomas' Church
Morecambe Parish Church
Lancaster CVS
Collingwood Immigration services (Lancaster office)
Christ Church Lancaster
Lancaster St Mary's Church
Lancaster and District Mobility Trust
Our volunteer and paid interpreters

Thank you so much to all the individuals who have volunteered and/or donated to RAIS Lancaster over the last year. We couldn't do any of it without you! As well as a growing number of monetary donations we receive many donations in kind from kitchen equipment small items of furniture to toiletries and cleaning materials. We are very grateful to all who donate in response to our appeals.

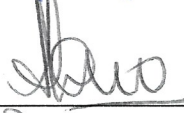
Dr E M Hare
Chair RAIS Lancaster
July 2023

Approval

The Annual Report and Accounts were approved by the Trustees and signed on their behalf by:

 Signed – Dr E M Hare, Chair
Dr Elizabeth Hare

27/6/23 Dated

 Signed – Mr S Thomas, Trustee
STEVEN THOMAS

27/6/23 Dated

**RAIS Lancaster
Independent Examiner's Report
For The Year Ended 31 March 2023**

Independent Examiner's Report to the Trustees of RAIS Lancaster CIO

I report to the charity trustees on my examination of the accounts of the charity for the year ended 31 March 2023 which are set out on pages 14 and 15.

Responsibilities and basis of report

As the charity's trustees 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 charity's accounts carried out under section 145 of the Act and in carrying out my examination I have followed all 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 giving me cause to believe that in any material respect:

1. accounting records were not kept in respect of the charity as required by section 130 of the Act; or
2. the accounts do not accord with those records; or
3. the accounts do not comply with the applicable requirements concerning the form and content of accounts set out in the Charities (Accounts and Reports) Regulations 2008 other than any requirement that the accounts give a 'true and fair view' which is not a matter considered as part of an independent examination.

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

Signed



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Name: Christine Harwood ACMA
Chartered Institute of Management Accountants

Dated: 27/6/2023

Accounts Matters Limited
7-1-10 Cameron House
White Cross
Lancaster
Lancashire
LA1 4XF

RAIS Lancaster
Receipts and payments accounts
For the year ended 31 March 2023

Account	Unrestricted	Restricted	2023	2022
Receipts				
Donations	5,182	4,760	9,942	4,856
Fundraising	307	-	307	-
Grants	9,860	19,964	29,824	17,950
Interest Income	8	-	8	-
Sub-total	15,357	24,724	40,081	22,806
Total receipts	15,357	24,724	40,081	22,806
Payments				
Accounting fees	657	-	657	-
Bank Fees	-	-	-	48
Insurance	237	-	237	278
Interpreters	1,941	-	1,941	1,143
Office expenses	2,236	-	2,236	447
Phones (for asylum seekers)	-	2,950	2,950	-
Room rental	5,608	1,168	6,776	3,555
Salaries and on costs	1,250	15,809	17,060	6,035
Staff expenses	125	67	191	-
Storage	-	-	-	1,308
Volunteers' expenses	291	-	291	-
Welfare fund - fares	6,472	3,000	9,472	7,762
Welfare fund - general welfare	1,170	-	1,170	-
Sub-total	19,986	22,995	42,981	20,575
Asset and investment purchases				
Equipment	2,192	732	2,924	1,684
Sub-total	2,192	732	2,924	1,684
Total payments	22,179	23,727	45,905	22,260
Net of receipts/(payments)	(6,821)	997	(5,824)	546
Transfers between funds	-	-	-	-
Cash funds last year end	11,241	7,415	18,656	18,110
Cash funds this year end	4,420	8,412	12,832	18,656

Statement of assets and liabilities at the end of the period
For the year ended 31 March 2023

E.Hare 27/6/3

Grant	B/fwd	Received	Spent	C/fwd
EWCT	-	360	-	360
LDMT	-	3,000	- 3,000	-
LWBF	-	1,800	- 1,800	-
Phones	-	4,760	- 3,682	1,078
Tara	-	1,354	- 1,354	-
The Fore	7,415	13,450	- 13,890	6,975
	7,415	24,724	- 23,726	8,412