

# Rossendale Refugee Support Group (RRSG)

Charity registration number: 1204240

## Trustees' Annual Report

August 2023 to July 2024

### Objectives and Activities

#### *Summary of the purposes of the charity*

The purposes of the charity as set out in the governing document are:

For the public benefit, to promote social inclusion and relieve financial hardship among people who are seeking asylum or have been granted refugee status, who are living in Rossendale and neighbouring areas, and who are socially excluded on the grounds of their social and economic position, by providing:

- Social and recreational facilities and events
- Information, advice, advocacy and general support, including opportunities to develop English language skills
- Donated goods and services for those who could otherwise not afford them.

#### *Summary of the main activities in 2023-2024*

In 2023-2024, in relation to the above purposes for the public benefit, RRSG has provided a weekly drop-in session, as well as ad hoc support and activities outside these sessions.

The weekly drop-in sessions run for two hours each Wednesday 10.30-12.30. We offer free tea and coffee, provide board games and children's toys, and respond to requests for advice, information and support with signposting or other help. The sessions provide opportunity for people to socialise with other refugees, and develop support networks. We try to use at least part of the session for providing English conversation practice for those who want this. Sometimes we have free second hand items available at

sessions, and often we are able to put clients in touch with free services provided by other organisations. We refund bus fares for those attending the sessions.

Outside sessions, volunteers have provided ad hoc information, advice and support, mainly via WhatsApp and phone, and have organised occasional social events.

Our work is conducted entirely through volunteers. All of the trustees volunteer with the charity, in addition to carrying out their responsibilities as trustees. By August 2024, we had had an additional six volunteers formally committed to working with the charity, five of whom remained in their role at the end of the year. Other individuals, including clients, have volunteered their services on an ad hoc basis, for example assisting in organising events, or interpreting.

We have not engaged in grant-making or social investment.

### *Public benefit*

The trustees have had regard to the guidance issued by the Charity Commission on public benefit.

## **Achievements and performance**

### *Numbers*

During the year August 2023 – July 2024 the charity welcomed 213 new clients. Since opening in July 2022, by July 2024, it had supported a total of 321 individuals.

In the first part of the year individuals were increasingly coming to drop-in sessions from neighbouring districts, and further afield. Trustees therefore developed more precise eligibility criteria, limiting services to people who live within Rossendale itself, and those who live outside Rossendale but nearer to the service than to another refugee support service.

### *Drop-in sessions*

The charity has operated drop-in sessions in 51 weeks out of 52 (we closed when the venue closed for Christmas). Occasionally visitors have offered additional activities, for example: a radio workshop; free haircuts; an art workshop; health advice sessions. The charity aims to provide English conversation within each session as a specific activity for those interested, with a different topic each week. Limitations to volunteer capacity mean that this has not been possible every week.

### *Social events*

During the year, social events have included a coach trip to an alpaca farm, a meet up at a local museum and art gallery, a New Year party, and a trip to a refugee week event in a neighbouring town. The charity has piloted a football group, (now replaced by the organisation *Active Lancashire* attending drop-in sessions and supporting clients to attend free football sessions each week). In response to the male pre-dominance within drop-in sessions, the charity has begun to organise occasional women-only coffee and cake sessions.

### *Information, advice, advocacy and support*

The problems people come with have also become more varied and complex over the year.

Issues people ask about frequently include: needing a solicitor; admin errors in relation to asylum claims; other asylum claim-related issues; asylum support appeals; financial hardship; homelessness; dental care; education; finding volunteer work; opening a bank account. When people are granted leave to remain, they often ask for a lot of support in addressing the many tasks facing them at this point, including applying for benefits, and seeking accommodation.

Some issues asked about require regulated immigration advice, which no volunteers are qualified to provide. This is a particular concern given the current limited access to Legal Aid immigration solicitors.

The charity has developed information sheets in response to frequently raised questions: free food and cheap food; ESOL; finding a lawyer; using the NHS; finding a dentist; moving on from asylum accommodation; mental health.

The charity also regularly responds to queries from other agencies dealing with people seeking asylum, and liaises with other local bodies with the aim of developing and tailoring what it offers.

### *Donated goods and services*

Through collaboration with organisations and individuals donating goods and services, the charity has been able to offer such things as food parcels, SIM cards, free gym subscriptions, and digital devices, clothing and toys. It has continued to develop partnerships with local and national organisations, to enable this.

### *Impact of the charity*

The large and increasing number of people using the charity's services, and the verbal and written feedback received are evidence that what it offers is valued by the target client group.

The charity appears to be reaching a significant proportion of those seeking asylum in Rossendale (the target area). In June 2024, Government statistics show that in Rossendale there were 224 asylum main applicants. There are no figures available for numbers of refugees, but Trustees believe that the charity has been in contact with all families who arrived in Rossendale through the Vulnerable Persons Resettlement scheme.

Regarding wider benefits to society, Trustees believe that providing adequate support to people who come to the UK as refugees or seeking asylum is likely to enable them to more quickly integrate and optimise their ability to contribute to society.

## Financial Review

### *Position at the end of the financial period*

At the end of the financial period, the charity held £4,750 in the bank and £215 in cash and payments due to creditors amounted to £289.

### *Reserves*

During this financial period the charity did not have a formal reserves policy.

Trustees did not regard it as necessary to have a reserves policy, or to hold reserves. In the event of funds not being available to continue the charity's work, there would be no costs to winding up the charity. There were no employees, and the charity had no ongoing financial commitments.

### *Deficit*

During this financial period the charity has not had any fund materially in deficit.

### *Principal sources of funding*

The charity's most important source of funding has been Rossendale Borough Council. It has also had a period of core activity funded through the local Integrated Care Board, and had grants to support events and activities from a local charity (Eric Wright Trust Fund).

## *Uncertainties about the charity continuing as a going concern*

The charity's main risks are: being unable to continue to attract sufficient funding, and/or volunteers and the workload becoming unmanageable for the available volunteers.

Funds at the end of the financial year were sufficient for the charity to continue to operate for several months. Volunteer capacity remained sufficient for the charity to continue to operate in the way that it has been doing.

Trustees plan to seek further funding through Rossendale Borough Council and applications to grant-making bodies, and to apply to provide resettler support services on behalf of Lancashire County Council. Trustees are continuing to recruit additional volunteers.

## Structure, Governance and Management

### *Charity constitution*

RRSG is a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO). Its governing document is its Constitution.

### *Trustee selection*

All current trustees are founding trustees and the charity has not yet needed to recruit additional trustees. When this is required, trustee selection will follow the charity's Constitution, in particular paragraph 9(2) Eligibility, 9(3) Number of trustees, and paragraph 10. Appointment of trustees.

## Reference and Administrative details

Charity name: Rossendale Refugee Support Group

Other name the charity uses: RRSg

Registered in England. Charity number: 1204240

Charity's principal address: c/o Haslingden Community Link, Bury Road, Haslingden  
BB4 5PG.

### *Names of the charity trustees who manage the charity*

	Trustee name	Office (if any)	Dates acted if not for whole year	Name of person (or body) entitled to appoint trustee (if any)
1	Brian Williams	Chair		
2	Elizabeth Walton	Vice-chair		
3	Noel Hoyle	Treasurer		
4	Alison Summers	Secretary		
5	Muhanad Karzon			
6	Huda Sharina			
7	Adrian Lythgoe			

### *Other information*

The charity does not have corporate trustees, or trustees holding title to property belonging to the charity.

The charity trustees do not hold funds or assets on behalf of others.

The charity does not employ any staff.

There are no exemptions from disclosure.

## Declarations

The trustees declare that they have approved the Trustees' report above.

Signed on behalf of the charity's Trustees:

Judith Alison Summers, Secretary

Date:

## ROSSENDALE REFUGEE SUPPORT GROUP

### Income & Expenditure

August 2023 to July 2024

**2022/23 Balance B/Fwd.** 1,589.33

#### Income:

B P & R Council	2,145.00	
Rossendale B C	6,459.00	
Country Trust	117.50	
Rossendale B C	3,300.00	
Eric		
Wright	500.00	
Rossendale B C	500.00	
Rossendale B C	2,000.00	
Rossendale B C	600.00	15,621.50
		<u>17,210.83</u>

#### Expenditure:

Creditors B/Fwd.		218.00
Insurance & Other Fees	202.04	
Room Hire	2,028.00	
Refreshments	813.00	
Admin & Stationery	109.09	
Subsidy - Bus Fare Refunds	4,346.80	
Activities	1,375.37	
Voucher Scheme & Emergency Payments	3,276.27	
Equipment	165.98	12,316.55
		<u>4,676.28</u>

#### Bank:

FCCU	2,650.35	
" NatWest	2,100.00	
Cash in hand	214.53	4,964.88
		<u>4,964.88</u>

#### Less Payments due:

Creditors:		<u>288.60</u>
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Funds Available as @ 31/07/2024 4,676.28