



Refugee  
Support  
Group

Helping Refugees and Asylum Seekers  
in Berkshire since 1993



## IMPACT REPORT 2022

November 2022

Charity Reg No: 1098058  
Company No: 04515238

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# CONTENTS

- 1 Our vision, mission and values
- 2 Our strategic aims
- 3 Highlights
- 4 Our response to Covid-19
- 5 Our impact
- 6 Financials
- 7 Our Social Value 2022
- 8 How we can improve
- 9 Thank you



# VISION

Our vision is an inclusive society where Refugees and people seeking asylum are treated with humanity, dignity and respect. We strive for a society where basic human needs are met, and where Refugees can receive the support they need to play a role in their new community.



# MISSION

Our mission is to improve the lives of Refugees and people seeking asylum by providing **support, advice, promoting awareness and facilitating integration into the local community.**



Advice



Education



Integration



# VALUES



Social justice, human dignity and respect, as prescribed by the European Convention on Human Rights and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) must be upheld.



Diversity of race, culture, ability, sexuality, gender, age, religion and other beliefs is beneficial to our community and should be celebrated.



The rights of individuals defined in the United Nations convention relating to the status of Refugees and responsibilities of signatories to that convention should be respected and upheld.



Working in partnership with other organisations improves effectiveness and spreads understanding.

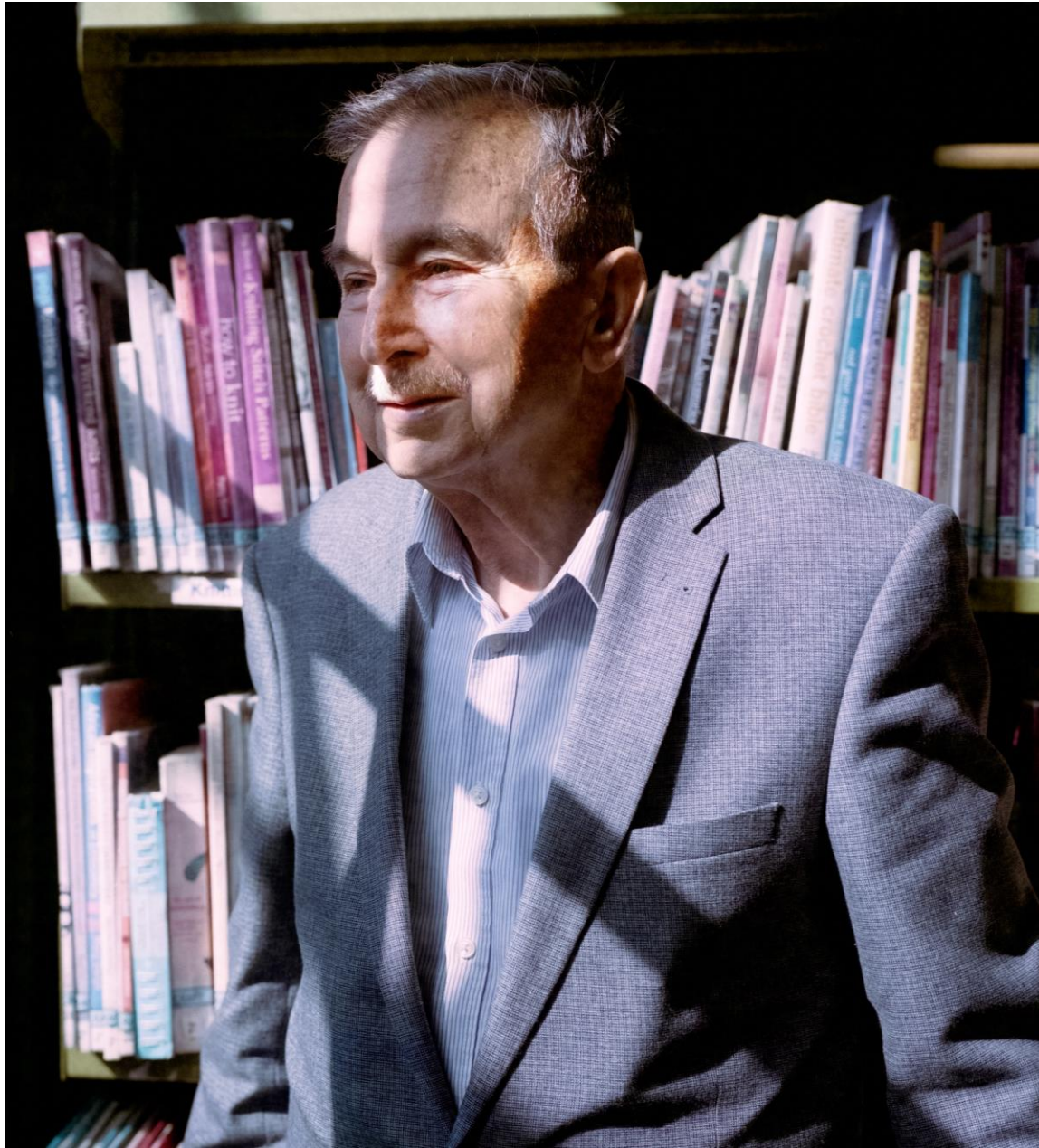


Maintaining confidentiality in working with those we seek to help is of the greatest importance in generating trust and security.



The services and activities of the organisation should be accessible to all people who need them, regardless of their individual circumstances.





# OUR STRATEGIC AIMS

To deliver our mission, we have three strategic aims:



1. To improve the quality of life experienced by refugees and asylum seekers in the Berkshire area



2. To maximise the resources available to support refugees and asylum seekers



3. To increase the awareness of the needs of refugees and asylum seekers in the area of benefit



# NEARLY 30 YEARS OF CHANGING LIVES.

We celebrated our 25<sup>th</sup> birthday in June 2020 – 25 years of supporting refugees and asylum seekers in the Berkshire area. The year 2020 was especially challenging due to Covid-19 and the Forbury Gardens tragedy, but we continued to provide support for hundreds of individuals whose needs were exacerbated by the pandemic, and many of the changes we implemented then, are still helping us today .



## 2021-22 HIGHLIGHTS

40

Active pairs meeting on average every week for 1h informal English language sessions at our befriending club. Clients report to have progressed in their spoken language and their understanding, with 65% of those surveyed reporting an increase in confidence too.

7%

Increase in attendance of our drop-in sessions from 2021 to 2022.

Moving our drop-in sessions online has allowed us to reach more people and increased attendance at a challenging time during the pandemic. We have stopped online drop-ins this year and attendances have continued to grow.

15

have found employment, voluntary work or education/training as a direct result of RSG assistance and support.



# OUR RESPONSE TO COVID-19

## COST OF LIVING CHALLENGES AHEAD

Covid-19 has hit refugees hard. It exacerbated issues like poor mental health, isolation and poverty that have always made refugees extremely vulnerable, while also interrupting the support activities and networks people relied on.

Across Berkshire, many refugees and asylum seekers have been trapped in their homes for months, lacking internet access or enough money for food, rent and bills. Many have faced worsening anxiety, depression, poverty and health fears on their own.

While the need for support was greater than ever, we were forced to suspend face to face activities and transfer all support services online. Our tireless team of staff and volunteers worked around the clock to adapt our services and provide the support people desperately needed.

We moved our one-to-one English Classes online, shifting them to focus on Befriending to help alleviate isolation. During the first lockdown we were providing 30+ hours of Befriending each week.

We delivered our Drop Ins online with a focus on social interaction, well-being and mindfulness. This included delivering items to grow herbs indoors in partnership with Hempen Farm, and providing yoga classes.

We crowdfunded £23,000 for our Drop In, ensuring it could return as soon as COVID restrictions lift, guaranteeing refugees and asylum seekers have a safe space to meet, make friends and access support for the next two years.

**We are extremely grateful to all our wonderful supporters, volunteers and staff that have helped us and as we leave the pandemic behind us, in 2022 we continue to provide support to families and individuals in need during such challenging times as the soaring cost of living hits us all.**



		
<div>138</div> <div>  </div>	<div>70</div> <div>  </div>	<div>17.4%</div> <div>  </div>
additional refugees and asylum seekers were provided a support worker since December 2021. We helped get them access to medical care, legal advice, mental health support and education.	laptops were donated to support families without internet access from our partner organisation Deloitte.	increase from last year of clients who are satisfied with RSG during the Covid-19 crisis. We will continue to support our clients and adapt services where appropriate.

# ALICE'S STORY



Alice arrived in the UK in 2002 as a refugee from Zimbabwe & later joined by her two daughters. She started volunteering at the Reading Refugee Support Group and became a Chairperson. She helped lead the steering group for the Reading City of Sanctuary and become a trustee and now an Ambassador of the City of Sanctuary UK. Alice has advocated for the plight of refugees, women's rights, human rights and struggles facing BAME people.

Alice worked and studied tirelessly, qualifying as a social worker and now finishing her PhD in Human Geography researching young immigrants while still working to help other refugees.

Alice is a breast cancer survivor, mother, wife, friend, scholar, author, speaker, activist and now an elected Councillor member of Reading Borough Council for Whitley Ward. **Alice's resilience and tenacity show the unbelievable accomplishments people can achieve when the barriers to opportunity are challenged and overcome.**

**"RSG was my backbone, my second home for many years" Alice.**





# OUR IMPACT 2021-2022



## Strategic Aim No.1

To improve the quality of life experienced by refugees and asylum seekers in the Berkshire area

We do this by providing direct support and advice and assisting individuals and families to integrate with, contribute to and benefit from the wider community.

## WHAT WE DID

### Our Actions

- ▶ Through the **drop-in centre**, **homework club** and **social activities** we support clients to learn skills that **enable independence**, such as obtaining a driving licence, registering for a GP and going shopping.
- ▶ We also support our clients through **in-school activities**, by liaising with schools to ensure that children from refugee families are set up with all the necessary resources to help them achieve more at school.



I've gained employment as a waiter and am doing online learning at college. My English language skills are improving through regular informal English support at the RSG drop-in. Being a part of the drop-in community has helped me feel settled in Reading and I enjoy the interaction online.



## THE IMPACT

### Our Impact

- ▶ We are **tracking improved independence**, with the aim to see **reduced isolation and loneliness** through helping refugees engage with the community and in school.
- ▶ Clients are becoming more independent the longer they are part of RSG, with clients who have been with us between 6m-1year, reporting a 42.2% increase with daily activities they carry out independently and feeling 64% less lonely and isolated.

42.2%

Of service users have experienced increased independence with everyday activities in the last 6 months

64%

Of service users surveyed feel less lonely and isolated since the previous 6 months



# OUR IMPACT



## WHAT WE DID

### Our Actions

- ▶ We started a **1-1 befriending/English club** in 2020, which has helped clients build on their conversational skills in an informal and social manner. We have 30-50 active pairs meeting every week. Befriending combats loneliness, contributes to increased integration and improved wellbeing, and helps highlight the issues faced by refugees and asylum seekers to the wider population of Reading.
- ▶ Prior to Covid-19, RSG's Job Club provided clients with information, tools and resources to help refugees prepare for and find work and volunteering opportunities. The Job Club stopped due to the lockdowns and we hope to restart it, but caseworkers continue to signpost clients to the Jobcentre and other job support services.



## THE IMPACT

### Our Impact

- ▶ We aim to **support clients to improve their confidence and conversational English**, as part of the ability to build their skills. This year we have seen 100% of clients reporting they have increased their overall confidence and their ability to converse in English.
- ▶ We do not know how many clients report to have been in employment that aligns with their aspirations, compared to last year, or whether satisfaction has increased, due to the challenges of Covid-19 and our employment support service stopping. We aim to improve this over the next year.

100%

Of clients report an increase in confidence and in ability to converse in English.

2%

of clients are in an employment of their aspiration compared to 6 months ago, because they are struggling to obtain 'Permission to work'.



# OUR IMPACT



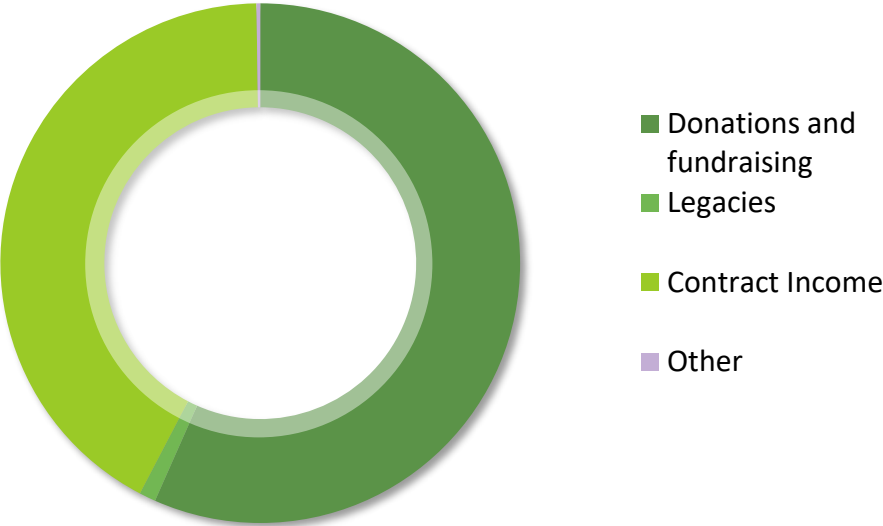
## Strategic Aim No.2

To maximize the resources available to support refugees and asylum seekers

We do this by building constructive partnerships with other agencies that work with them, pursuing an active fundraising programme that increases the financial sustainability and stability of RSG and continually improve the sustainability, governance and management of RSG

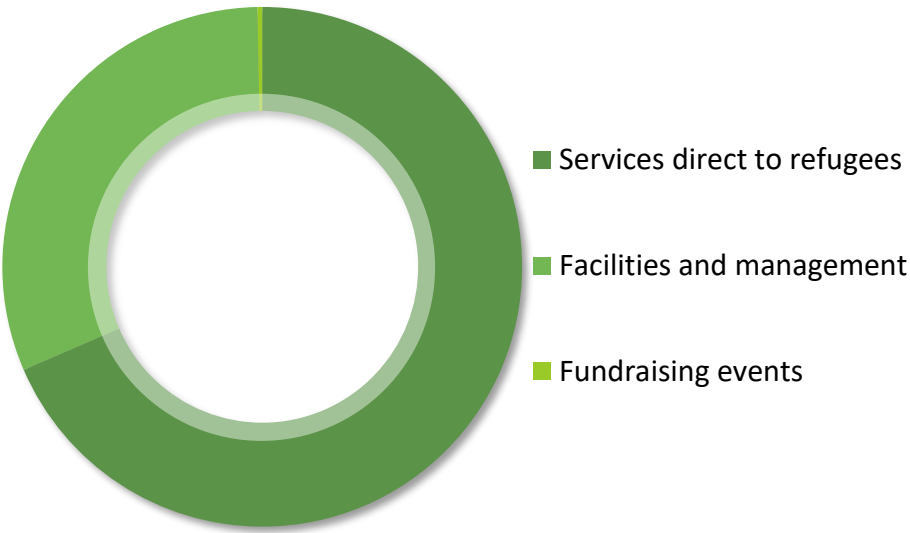
### What we raised together

In 2021-22, we raised **£563,622**



### Where your money went

In 2021-22, we spent **£503,626**



Your £1 this year:	69p	Goes to services directly supporting refugees and asylum seekers.
	31p	Is spent on office, administration and fundraising.

£345,029	£157,077	£1,520
Supports services direct to refugees and asylum seekers	Facilities & management	Fundraising events



# OUR IMPACT



## 3. To increase the awareness of the needs of refugees and asylum seekers in the area of benefit

We do this by increasing the profile of the work of RSG and developing a greater understanding of the size and nature of the refugee and asylum seeker population

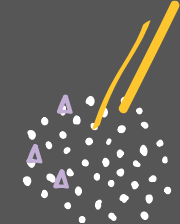
### WHAT WE DID

#### Our Actions

- ▶ **We recognize that in partnership with others, we can achieve far more than we could achieve alone.** That's why we invite partners to all our events. We **engaged with a wide range of stakeholders in the community and broader society**, such as the Home Office, Reading College, Red Cross, Deloitte, Reading Borough Council Housing and Jobcentre Plus.
- ▶ This year, **we ran 7 events**, such as our Legal Walk (walking 10km to raise money for our free legal advice services) and the Christmas Appeal, with an **average attendance of 53 people**.



I've gained employment as a hospital assistant in January and am receiving good pay. I'm also attending a college course and training to be a chef. I've benefited from increased confidence and communication in the drama and writing online and from the community built up in the online drop-in.



### THE IMPACT





#### Our Impact

- ▶ This year, 20.5% of campaigns we ran had client participation. We aim to be a user-led organisation and it is important that lived experience informs our public communications and dialogues.
- ▶ Our annual event has had an average of 53 people per event attendance, 28 press mentions and our social media following on all 4 platforms (Twitter, Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn) has increased on average by 392 followers, whilst the Newsletter audience has almost doubled.

20.5%	463%	28	53
Of our campaigns had client participation in the last year, making sure that lived experience is at the forefront.	Increase in social media engagement over the last year.	Press mentions from 2021-2022.	Average attendance from Members of public in RSG events over the last year.

# How we calculated our value to society

Note: Value for government refers to the cost of to the government of delivering similar service to RSG, value for the stakeholder refers to the cost RSG clients would have incurred on similar services if RSG had not provided them

Impact Area		X		=	Value to society
 <b>Value of <u>access to employment</u></b>	<b>15</b> <i>Number of people who are in employment or part time work as a result of RRSg</i>	X	<b>£12,657</b> <i>Per claimant per year: value of job seeker's allowance</i>	=	<b>£189,855</b>
 <b>Value of <u>improved English language skills</u></b>	<b>2,891</b> <i>Hours of conversational English delivered through drop-ins and befriending</i>	X	<b>£25</b> <i>Average price per lesson of English classes*</i>	=	<b>£72,275</b>
 <b>Value of <u>improved independence</u></b>	<b>53</b> <i>Number of regular attenders with improved independence as a result of RSG, as reported by clients in feedback questionnaires</i>	X	<b>£1,773</b> <i>Average cost per person of regular attendance at voluntary or local organisation</i>	=	<b>£93,542</b>
 <b>Value of <u>community engagement and reduced isolation</u></b>	<b>176</b> <i>Number of people who are less lonely as a result of RSG, as reported by client feedback and regular attendance</i>	X	<b>£156 x 52</b> <i>Mental health community provision average cost per person per session for a year</i>	=	<b>£1,425,035</b>

Sources and assumptions:

[Unit cost database](#) developed by the Greater Manchester Combined Authority; [UK Social Value Bank](#) developed by HACT – uses national averages, for which refugees and asylum seekers will be outside of National TOMs (Themes, Outcomes, Measures) Measurement Framework developed by the Social Value Portal; [Caseworker salary](#); [Unit cost database](#) developed by the Greater Manchester Combined Authority; [UK Social Value Bank](#) developed by HACT – uses national averages, for which refugees and asylum seekers will be outside of National TOMs (Themes, Outcomes, Measures) Measurement Framework developed by the Social Value Portal; [Refugees and the UK Labour Market](#) report by Oxford University; [CEFR spectrum](#) and [language learning time](#) guidance and [English lesson price](#); [Refugee Action report](#) – cost of ESOL



# OUR VALUE TO SOCIETY

Our value to society is to improve the lives of refugees and people seeking asylum by providing support, advice, promoting awareness and facilitating integration into the local community. We calculate our value to society



# OUR IMPROVEMENTS

Whilst we are incredibly proud of the work we do to support asylum seekers and refugees, we recognise we have areas for improvement that will help us continue to grow and improve.

## WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE

- This year, there was a 3.5% increase in the number of clients who scored below the UK average for mental wellbeing. We recognise there may have been challenges in terms of making contact and speaking to people due to remote learning and working because of Covid-19 and we will continue to seek ways to successfully engage with our clients and provide support in a way that's right for them.
- Client feedback surveys showed that as a result of our direct support, 39% of clients report they feel they have advanced in their ability to navigate life in the UK independently, e.g., managing public transport confidently.
- From 2021-22, we supported 15 clients into employment. Many people are faced with difficulty in obtaining permission to work. Nonetheless, we feel there is significant scope to increase the support RSG offers around gaining employment and will prioritise it in our next Business Plan.



# THANK YOU

We want to thank all the volunteers, staff and donors who support the charity and are the reason behind changing the lives of hundreds of individuals.

Thank you to Deloitte, our corporate charity partner, who designed and established the calculations behind this, our first ever impact report.



Refugee Support Group also wants to personally thank Stephen Cook for this dedicated service and commitment to the charity, his long standing devotion to the cause and his dedication for supporting every individual who comes to RSG.



# GIVE THE NEXT GENERATION OF REFUGEES IN BERKSHIRE A LIFELINE

## Reading West Berkshire Wokingham

Writing a Will lays out exactly what you want to leave your friends and family. Without one, intestacy laws decide who gets what from your estate.

Writing a Will ensures your loved ones are looked after and can also help the causes you hold dear to continue transforming lives long into the future.

Remembering Refugee Support Group in your Will can give hope to the next generation of refugees in Berkshire.

Each year **HUNDREDS** of refugees need our support in Berkshire, and that number continues to grow. We've spent over 28 years supporting refugees, and our aim is to be here for refugees long into the future.

Leaving a gift in your will can help us continue successful programmes like our Drop-In Centre that helps refugees to feel less isolated and improve their mental health.


It could fund our football team that lets refugees make friends through sport, or our Homework Club that aids children to achieve their potential at school.

A Legacy gift could even enable us to create new projects that will touch people's lives in new ways and help them to succeed.

We are proud to be partnered with Barrett & Co solicitors to offer discounted Will services to our supporters! Please contact [jonjo@rrsg.org.uk](mailto:jonjo@rrsg.org.uk)

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solicitors



 **Reading**  
City of Sanctuary

