

LRMN

Lewisham Refugee & Migrant Network

IMPACT REPORT

2021/22

Empowering refugees and migrants since 1992



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Welcome

Message from the Chair

It has been almost two years since I became LRMN’s Chair of Trustees in 2021. During this time, I have been impressed by LRMN’s resilience and tenacity in supporting sanctuary seekers and reinvigorating services after the pandemic.

However, over the course of these two years, I’ve also witnessed a shift in our national environment towards people from sanctuary seeking backgrounds and a more acute need for our services. The Hostile Environment policies that have now been around for a decade, have worsened. Of course, we are proud of the warmth and welcome embedded in our home Borough, Lewisham. This was never more apparent in the joyful welcome that Little Amal, the puppet who travelled from Syria to the UK representing a perilous journey that unaccompanied minors take, received when she visited Lewisham. We want to ensure that this attitude of celebration, support, and warmth is one that all sanctuary seekers are able to experience when rebuilding their lives here.

At LRMN, we have also been making the most of opportunities to work with like-minded organisations, including partnering with Bromley, Lewisham and Greenwich Mind and others in the Lewisham Community Wellbeing project for

people with mental health needs; with Lewisham Council and the Refugee Council to support refugee resettlement; and joining with the UK Association of Women Judges to assist women judges who fled Afghanistan since last August.

As we approach the end of the year, I am proud to be able to say that we are on track to achieve our strategic goals. One of the highlights for me includes LRMN’s role in coordinating support for those fleeing the emergency in Ukraine as part of the Lewisham Community Coordination project. I would also like to put a spotlight on our progress in measuring the outcomes of our services with the support of the Lloyds Foundation last year, which had a particular focus on our Immigration service.

Given the successes of the last year, and the renewed energy and strength generated by national campaigns, I am excited about drawing up plans for the next three years at LRMN, and confident that our services will continue to strengthen and support more people across London.

As always, at LRMN we are profoundly grateful for the support of the entire LRMN community: our funders, our volunteers, our staff, my fellow trustees and, of course, our clients, whose resilience and hope continue to be an example to us all.

Dr Claire Morris, Chair of Trustees



Message from the CEO

As we have moved out of the pandemic this year, the team at LRMN has experienced a year of growth, motivated by the acute need to support people seeking sanctuary.

We have recruited 11 more staff, as well as introducing new services to continue responding to the needs of sanctuary seekers. These include our new Access to Healthcare work, our Building People, Changing Minds volunteer scheme, our Holistic Services project, and the Greater London Authority Hotel project. We've also expanded our resettlement work and our immigration advice service, as well as re-starting more of our community services, including ESOL classes and gardening.

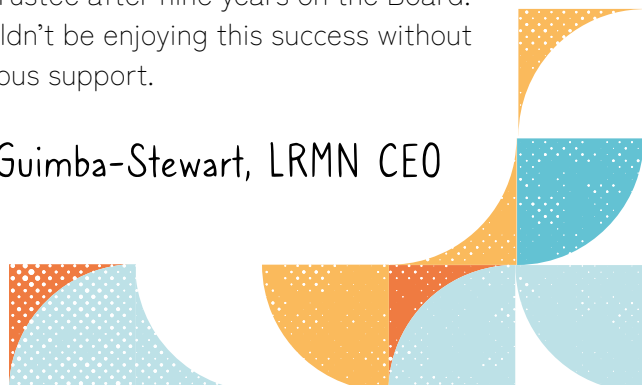
It has been a pleasure to see LRMN go from strength to strength this year as we move forward towards achieving our strategic goals. I am particularly proud of our advice services. Under increased demand and pressure, we have been able to help over a thousand people across London on their housing, immigration, welfare and benefits cases. Of course, LRMN is made up of its community. I am proud to see many of our clients getting more involved in our work at LRMN, through activities, campaigning and decision making. A highlight for me was when six of our community of sanctuary seekers stood up and campaigned for change during the local elections, speaking directly to Lewisham and Greenwich Council candidates.

This campaigning work is imperative given the new Nationality and Borders Act and Rwanda plan, dubbed the Anti-Refugee Laws, which are a real threat to those fleeing violence and persecution. LRMN has contributed to national campaigns seeking to repeal these harmful laws, working in solidarity with our clients and being an active member of national coalitions. Through grassroots efforts, we contribute to a national movement of welcome and support for everyone - our roots may be local, but our mission is national.

Next year, we will focus on securing a Legal Aid contract, increasing our capacity to manage demand, expanding our rights-based services, opposing the hostile environment through our sanctuary work, and supporting our clients to navigate the cost of living crisis. In all of this, we aim to be an anchor for refugees, migrants and asylum seekers - a place they know they can turn to for safety, support, and sanctuary on their journey to rebuilding their lives.

Finally, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to Diana Fawcett, my previous long-standing Chair who is now stepping down as LRMN trustee after nine years on the Board. LRMN wouldn't be enjoying this success without her enormous support.

Rosario Guimba-Stewart, LRMN CEO



About Us

Our Vision

To have a fair, just and equal society where all people can live in harmony with each other and in a state of positive wellbeing.

Our Mission

To empower refugees, asylum seekers and migrants to know and exercise their rights, thrive, make a positive contribution, integrate and take control of their lives.

Our Values

Collaboration: We work together with the people we serve, our team and partners to design and deliver our services and campaigns.

Rights-based: Human rights are at the heart of everything we do at LRMN – from how we work, to how we advocate for change.

Integrity: We operate on the principles of honesty and integrity.

Inclusion: From our staff, to our clients, we respect and value our differences and harness the power of inclusion to help LRMN and our clients thrive.

Equality: We are committed to building equity, diversity and inclusion into all aspects of our work, to better reflect the communities we serve, make better decisions and be more innovative.

Strategic Vision

Grow and improve our services

We aim to offer joined up and holistic services to our clients that are driven by their needs. Key to this is client feedback and involvement in decision making across LRMN.

Develop effective and relevant partnership, collaboration and influence

We want to work in collaboration with others to offer the best service and advocate for migrant and refugee rights.

Better governance, management, financial and organisational health

We are bolstering our leadership and governance to ensure our services are well financed, managed and monitored – underpinned by accountability.

Engaging people with lived experience

LRMN is committed to diversity and inclusion, focusing on including our clients and others with lived experience in designing and delivering our services.



Highlights 2021/22

188

women & girls supported by women's project

1,738

people came to LRMN for support

541

applications made to regularise immigration status

"When no one else accepted me, LRMN accepted me."

- LRMN client

623

given housing & welfare benefits advice

1,000+

food parcels and vouchers given by LRMN, with 406 of these given at the Migrant Hub

132

helped to improve their mental health and wellbeing

£1,582

hardship funds given





Immigration

We want everyone who uses the immigration system to access justice fairly and equally, and get on with their lives. At LRMN, we helped clients make 541 applications to regularise immigration status in 2021/22. Over 150 of these applications have already been successful, and we continue working tirelessly to secure a positive outcome for all of our ongoing applications. We are confident that the vast majority of these will be successful, and are proud that our work helps sanctuary seekers to avert high Home Office fees, changing conditions attached to their immigration status so that our community can access desperately needed public funds and prevent destitution.

As we have intensified our focus on the needs of the homeless, we have seen an increase in complex cases. With the impact of the pandemic, lack of access to public funds for many migrants and the recent changes in immigration policy, we expect the number of migrants facing homelessness to keep rising.

Altogether, we supported about 165 homeless clients through our partnerships, such as with Depaul UK and Bench Outreach.

We still continue to support residents in Lewisham, Bexley and surrounding boroughs. As there is little immigration advice services in these areas, we often support people at a point of crisis. In 2021/22, over 50% of our clients were residents of Lewisham and Bexley.

We will continue to seek legal aid funding next year, and help people in so called 'advice deserts' in south east London.

Cecile's story

Sometimes life can be unpredictable. Cecile came to the UK to look after her ill daughter and her four grandchildren. But within a few months, her daughter sadly passed away. Quickly, Cecile applied for further leave to remain - and was given status but with no access to public funds to look after four children. Soon she fell into rent arrears and was unable to afford basic amenities - let alone the expensive Home Office fees to extend her visa further.

That is when we met Cecile. We helped her to put in an urgent change of conditions application, so that she could access public funds and support her family. This was quickly granted, along with a fee waiver, so she could submit her application for Further Leave to Remain. Without our help, Cecile and her family would have been evicted, and she would have been undocumented. Cecile can now access the funds she needs to support her grandchildren without the worry of an expiring immigration status.



Housing and Welfare Benefits

We believe that everyone deserves a safe place to call home and access the support they need to rebuild their lives. Unfortunately, we are still seeing the effects of the pandemic on our clients who have struggled to reconnect with their support networks and access public services. This has meant a rise in complex cases that take longer to resolve, often from previous clients. In 2021/22, we supported 623 people with housing and welfare benefits advice. We work to assist with resolving rent arrears, housing situations, and improving housing situations, among other services.

At our Migrant Hub in Greenwich, we bring together other specialist organisations to offer a drop-in service, giving free advice and practical support to refugees, asylum seekers and migrants, on immigration, housing, domestic violence and more.

In 2021/22, we provided information and advice to 312 people at the Migrant Hub.

As we returned to more face to face services, we held community events at the Migrant Hub, including Refugee Week celebrations and regular meetings with our Community Forum.

As the UK moves into a period of increased economic difficulty, we are anticipating an increased demand on our services, and will be focusing on continuing to build our capacity. Our focus remains on assisting our clients in an empowering way, also improving knowledge of housing rights and entitlements.

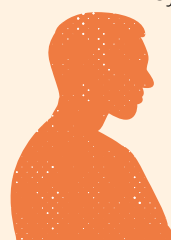
Liem's story

LRMN often supports people who slip through the cracks of our complex and hostile immigration system. We act as a safety net for people who would otherwise have nothing.

This was the case with Liem, a Ukrainian national of Vietnamese descent. While he was visiting the UK for a holiday, a war broke out. He couldn't return to his home in Odessa, but he was on a visitor's visa, unable to work and with no recourse to public funds. He soon found himself at risk of homelessness and alone in an unfamiliar country, disconnected from everything he knew.

LRMN immediately took steps to support Liem, using our emergency hardship funds to ensure he had somewhere to live. Liem had been failed by a loophole in the system, and the Housing Team were against the clock to find a solution. Against all odds, LRMN finally succeeded in getting the Council to agree they had a duty to give Liem a safe place to live. Meanwhile, the Immigration Team took on Liem's case.

Though he's not able to return home to his brother and other family yet, Liem now has the right to remain in the country, work, study and apply for benefits. Like Liem, many people end up falling through the cracks of our complex system – that's where LRMN steps in.



Campaigning for Change

We campaign to make our neighbourhoods places of sanctuary – where anyone can thrive and get help when they need it, regardless of their immigration status. We campaign to make Lewisham, as well as Greenwich, into Boroughs of Sanctuary. We also participate in national campaigns by collaborating with others to build capacity, produce research and lobby for change. We are committed to this work as well as raising the voice of people with lived experience in our campaigns, through our Community Forum.

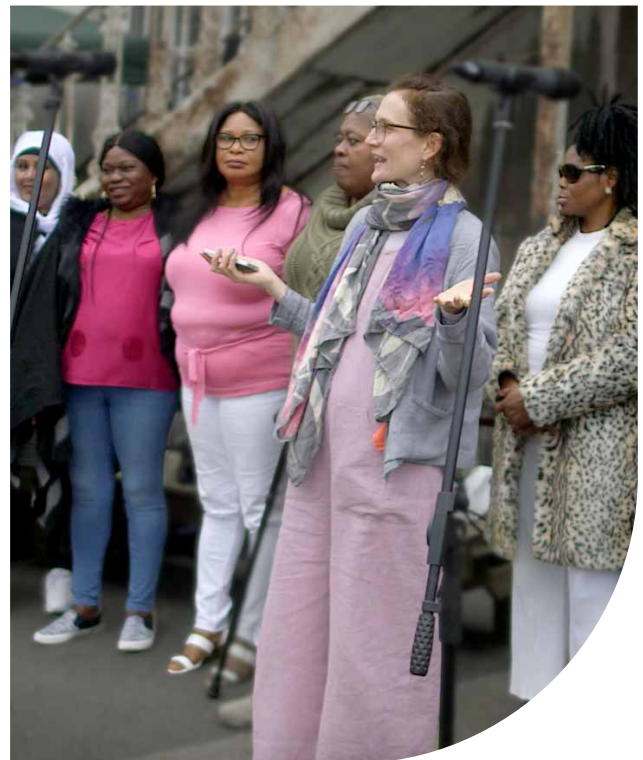
In 2021/22, we spent the first half of the year building our Greenwich Borough of Sanctuary Group and campaigning activities, and focused on deepening Lewisham’s commitment to sanctuary.

In Lewisham, we were glad to see Lewisham Hospital take positive steps to overhaul its approach to NHS charges and a total of 27 GPs surgeries sign up to the Safe Surgeries scheme.

We were also elated to have Little Amal, a large puppet representing the journey of unaccompanied minors from Syria, visit Lewisham, as the first Borough of Sanctuary in London. The welcome she was given is the welcome we hope to see extended to everyone from a sanctuary seeking background.

Lewisham also extended its resettlement targets to include Afghan and Ukrainian refugees and we worked together to design an appropriate response. The second half of the year was spent focusing on local elections, where we listened to hundreds of our clients to present the issues together to the local candidates. This has led to commitments from both Greenwich and Lewisham leaders to make changes to housing, healthcare and sanctuary into cornerstones of their time in office.

Next year, we will focus on making these commitments a reality as well campaigning locally on national issues affecting our clients.





Improving Wellbeing

Lewisham Community Wellbeing

We provide emotional and culturally specific support for adults living in Lewisham. This is a non-clinical service for refugees, asylum seekers and migrants from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic backgrounds in partnership with MIND and others.

In 2021/22, we supported over 130 clients – with 33% gaining employment, re-entering education and training, and volunteering. We also set up a culturally specific peer support group for Tamil speaking clients. With a view to welcome new people to our service, we met with 55 different local organisations as part of our community engagement work.

Supporting Women's* Wellbeing

The Women Together project addresses the main barrier migrant survivors face when accessing safety: exclusion from rights and entitlements. Therefore, we offer therapeutic support, including counselling, and a weekly women's group to help fight isolation. We offer advice, wellbeing support and self-advocacy training to empower survivors of gender-based abuse to lead an independent, happy and financially stable life as they settle in the UK.

*Note: Please be aware that LRMN values inclusion. Therefore, when we refer to "women", we are referring to any person who identifies as a woman.

We helped 55 women and girls in 2021/22 receive counselling and 188 women actively attended our women's group meetings.

In 2021/22, we focused on building resilience and independence, so survivors can access the tools for independent, fulfilling lives. This year, we held transition training to foster independence, employability and address barriers to inclusion for those who have recently regularised their status. Our members also engaged in art and drama workshops, which gave new creative ways of expressing themselves. We also continued to support our Champions programme, which trains and supports survivors to act as peer-advocates. Over the summer of 2021, we ran summer activities for 16 women and their children to provide structure, social contact and engaging activities to mothers coping with the summer break.

Men's Wellbeing

We offer a small, dedicated, and clinically powerful counselling service to men at LRMN, engaging with people in precarious situations. Using talking therapy, we have helped 35 men over intensive sessions across 2021/22. Read more about the lives we have changed in our case study below.

Access to Healthcare

Before the pandemic, sanctuary seekers faced entrenched barriers to accessing healthcare – from registering with a GP to NHS charges. During the pandemic, these barriers became

critical. Accessing healthcare for complex cases was often vital to their wellbeing and financial stability, as many had unresolved health issues and NHS debt. Healthcare was also often key to enabling them to claim their rights and entitlements - forming the basis to accessing housing or settling immigration status.

In response, we launched an Access to Healthcare pilot in March 2021, with the help of a student volunteer. We soon found that about 150 clients coming to our services since 2019 have stated they're not registered with a GP.

We supported 100 new clients, helping them find emergency free dental treatment, registering with GPs and advocating around NHS charges. We were even able to have one client write off £2,366 in NHS debt.

We also held healthcare rights training facilitated by Doctors of The World for about 30 people and also recruited about 20 Covid-19 Vaccine Champions in Lewisham to help inform more people about the benefits of the vaccine. We held a Lewisham Migration Forum focused on this issue - bringing in NHS partners, Doctors of the World and other migrant organisations together to coordinate a response. Out of this came our drive to promote the Safe Surgeries initiative, which trains GP practices in registering migrants. We also participated in other healthcare campaigns (see Campaigning for Change).

Rakeem's story

When Rakeem met Lara, he thought it was a dream come true. When they got married, he was granted the right to live in the UK and worked to support his wife.

His dream soon turned into a nightmare. Soon, Lara became abusive, even locking Rakeem outside in his underwear during winter, and neglecting his health needs. After she filed for a legal divorce, Rakeem lost his right to remain in the UK. Traumatized, unwell, and now at risk in the country that had become his home, Rakeem came to LRMN.

Through our counselling service and mental health support, LRMN helped Rakeem to start finding himself and his confidence again. Our housing team supported him out of homelessness, and he was connected to health services that empowered him to manage his own health.

After many years of accompanying Rakeem on his journey, LRMN helped him with his application for the right to remain in the UK. He was granted permission to remain this year, allowing him to finally start living again. Unfortunately, many migrants and asylum seekers continue to live in this nightmare.





We provide a number of services that help people from migrant, refugee and asylum seeking backgrounds to rebuild their lives – such as gardening sessions and English language classes. We also deliver life-changing support to resettled refugees.

In partnership with Lewisham Council and Refugee Council, we deliver life-changing support to 13 resettled refugee families from Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan and other countries. In 2021/22, we helped resolve 96 cases on everything from accessing welfare support to helping children access education. We were also glad to see 10 people start training, volunteering and ESOL classes.

We provided 35 people across our services a supportive, friendly and informal environment for students to improve their English level and build their confidence.

In 2021/22, we introduced a new community-based service. Building People, Changing Minds works in partnership with Lewisham Local and Lewisham Speaking Up to connect members of the LRMN community with volunteering placements across Lewisham.



“They helped me through everything, my immigration, my housing, my everything, and today, I’m on my feet.”

– LRMN client



Emergency Support

Despite the easing of restrictions, the pandemic continued to affect our clients as they struggled to make ends meet. During these challenging times, we made sure to create provisions for support.

We provided over 1,000 food parcels and vouchers to those in need of help, and also gave away £1,582 in hardship funds to those in the most urgent situations in 2021/22.

Knowing how important connection is, we also provided data and digital support, giving 50 smartphones to our clients.

“[LRMN] makes me to know that there’s still hope in life.”

– LRMN client

Paula’s story

When Paula first came to LRMN, it was for help with applying for welfare benefits – but this application was the key to so much more.

Paula lives with a disability. Unable to work, she found herself in debt. Without any savings, her situation was steadily declining, leaving her unable to afford even the most basic necessities. When she caught Covid, Paula was trapped in her home without any of the help she needed.

Hearing about this, LRMN arranged for food parcels to be delivered to Paula’s door, ensuring she was able to eat nutritious meals. Though she had previously applied for Personal Independence Payments, LRMN helped Paula to submit a new application, using detailed medical evidence. Not only was Paula’s second application approved, her payments were backdated, helping her pay off her debt and have enough to live on. With all of this in place, Paula was able to unlock her potential, giving her a greater sense of security and independence.

Often, LRMN works with people exactly like Paula, who face overlapping challenges. LRMN untangles these knotty issues, created deliberately by the hostile environment.



Behind our Services

Organisational Health

We continue to focus on our strategic plan which seeks to develop our financial and organisational health, enhance our governance and management, and grow and improve our services.

In 2021/22, we launched a new referral system, to make it easier for clients to refer themselves into our services.

As we transitioned to hybrid working, we renovated our office and created our very own intranet to help staff stay up to date. We also continued to grow our workforce with 11 new staff.

This year was also a big year for our brand, as we refreshed our look and updated our website. Next year we plan to roll out new equity, diversity and inclusion policies and practices as well as strengthen our monitoring and evaluation mechanisms.



Financial Overview

We are very thankful to all our funders. Despite the continuing economic challenges and the pandemic, we are pleased to say that our income streams were maintained at a similar level in 2021/22. LRMN’s income was £1,082,693 in the year ending 31st March 2022 compared to £1,115,019 in the year ending 31st March 2021.

The total expenditure was £913,179 in the year ended 31st March 2022 compared to £718,634 in the year ended 31st March 2021. Overall, there was a surplus for the year of £169,514 compared with a surplus in the prior year of £396,385. We received 55% of funds from Trusts and Foundations, 40% from statutory funding and 5% from other sources.

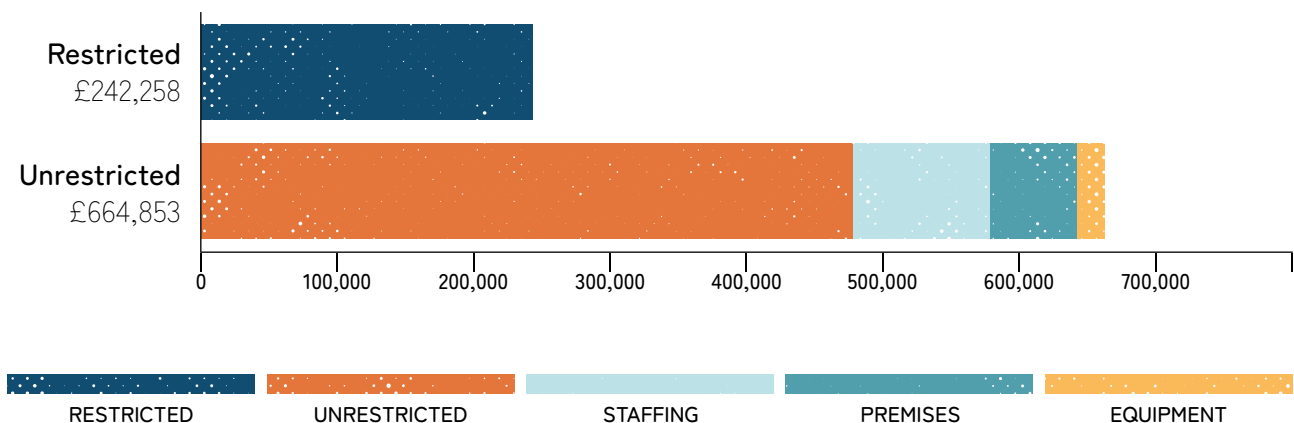
LRMN activities in the financial year 2021/22 resulted in a surplus of £19,937 restricted and a surplus £149,577 unrestricted. The Total Reserves Funds at 31st March 2022 were £242,258 general and £664,853 unrestricted. The unrestricted funds consist of £489,853 general

funds and £175,000 are designated funds: £100,000 for staffing, £60,000 for premises costs and £15,000 for equipment updating.

Our principal funding sources were London Borough of Bexley CAB, Trust for London, Bromley Lewisham & Greenwich Mind, Refugee Council, The Charity of Sir Richard Whittington, Ben & Jerry’s Foundation Fund - A Tides Foundation Fund, London Borough of Lewisham, Greenwich Council, London Borough of Hackney, Oak Foundation, Henry Smith Charity, City Bridge Trust, Young Londoners Fund, Access to Justice Foundation, AB Charitable Trust, GLA - Rough Sleeping Response, GLA - IARSF, Lloyds Bank Foundation for England & Wales, The National Lottery Community Fund, London Legal Support Trust and Homeless Link with City Bridge Trust and Oak support.

We are very grateful for all the funding received, which has enabled us to continue to support our clients and deliver our services.

Total Reserves Funds at 31st March 2022



Acknowledgement

Without the support of so many important people and organisations, we would not be the organisation that we are today. We would like to extend a special thank you to the following:

- To all our funders, individual and corporate donors for your continued support and trust.
- To Ades Cash & Carry, Fareshare, Sainsbury's, Tesco, Greggs and Perry Rise Baptist Church for their regular food donations.
- To Bench Outreach for letting us use their training room free of charge.

Thank you

LRMN is extremely grateful for the support to our funders, volunteers, staff, trustees and clients for supporting us as we provide vital services. It is the generosity, hard work, and commitment of our community that allows us to respond to the needs of refugees, migrants and sanctuary seekers across London.



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