



## ANNUAL REPORT 2024-2025

RRSG is a small charity supporting people seeking asylum and refugees in Rossendale. Our full report for our financial year August 2024 to July 2025 will be available on the Charity Commission website in the new year. This is a shorter version.

### Why does RRSg exist?

Refugees and people seeking asylum share the same problems as others who live with poverty and disadvantage.

As well as this, many struggle with isolation, badly miss family and friends, fear for their future, or are still traumatised by the events that made them flee their homes. Often their health has been affected.

It's harder to tackle your problems when you've lost your support networks, don't know anyone here, don't know how things work in the UK and are not confident in English.

#### Examples of problems that clients bring

*I'm homeless, please help!*

*How can I learn English? How can I find a dentist? How can I open a bank account? Why am I not allowed to work? How can I volunteer?... I don't know anyone who speaks my language...*

*I've a letter from the Home Office but I don't what they're telling me...*

*My children are still in Afghanistan, I'm desperately worried about them...*

*My child says her classmates laugh at her... There's a mistake on my visa and I can't use it... I've waited two years for my asylum decision, I'm tired, I can't sleep, I miss my family..*

### Our offer

- A drop-in session every week (Wednesdays 9.30-11.30 at Haslingden Community Link) with refreshments, games, casework support, English conversation practice - and bus fare refunds. Our drop-in helps connect clients to our wonderful partner organisations who offer a range of support and activities, including weekly community football sessions, advice on employment and energy saving and chance to apply for a limited number of free gym passes.
- A casework service throughout the week, responding on average to 125 queries a month.
- Additional social events and activities, such as a women's meet-up, trips, and arts events.
- A website with up to date information on useful topics - from moving on from asylum support, to finding an NHS dentist. [www.rrsg.co.uk](http://www.rrsg.co.uk).

### Some feedback from clients

*"It has given me a safe space to learn, connect with others and feel less isolated ..... helped me feel more confident and informed .....even when something seems difficult to solve you are always there to help ..... thank you for your humanity and kind treatment. You are the best group ... a ray of hope for asylum seekers"*

### Who uses our service?

Among the 181 clients new to us this year 73% were men, 27% women. 81% adults, 19% children in families. 59% were adults living alone, some of whom have families back home. 38% were living Haslingden, 38% in Bacup & Stacksteads, 12% in Rawtenstall and Waterfoot. 64% were asylum seeking, 36% already had leave to remain when they registered. Amongst those who have come to Rossendale as refugees there are people from a wide range of backgrounds - from University graduates to others who grew up in situations where they never had opportunity to go to school.

### Where are people from?

Origin of new RRSB clients this year in order of frequency - Afghanistan, Eritrea, Iran, Iraq, Syria, Somalia, Yemen, Sudan, Ukraine, Pakistan, Senegal, Kuwait, Libya, Palestine, Turkey, Ethiopia, and one person each from: Botswana, Columbia, Gambia, Georgia, India, Jordan, Namibia and Vietnam.



Photograph by Benjamin Hemmati

## Some activities this year

- Lots of our clients join local people in weekly community football sessions run by Rossendale Works
- We've had several meet-ups for women and children
- We held two parties for clients and supporters - a New Year party, and a quilt-making party (come to our drop-in to view the product of that one!)
- Trips out have included autumn and spring trips to the amazing Children's Adventure Farm Trust, a seaside trip to St Annes Kite festival, and a trip to Communityfest.
- The Boo kindly invited our clients to free Eid party, to lots of their arts events, and helped our clients make a giant aeroplane to join the Waterfoot Wakes procession.

**Thanks to all of the organisations who sponsored these events**

## Our resources

- Our core work this year has been funded by Rossendale Borough Council, the National Lottery and individual donations, with Lancashire County Council contributing to our Refugee Week event. The increase in workload has meant escalating costs, and a great increase in the work done by volunteers.

### Some comments from volunteers

*"I feel I'm doing a little bit to help people who've been dealt a very bad hand in life."*

*"I hate hearing asylum seekers being scapegoated for everything going wrong in our society. Of course the UK can't take in unlimited numbers of people, but I think we should take our fair share, say the average for other European countries, not less than others, like now.. And I think we should be welcoming and compassionate to people who are just here to seek safety..."*

*"We don't know the half of what's happened to people, they don't talk about it...I worked with a charity in Huddersfield that did medical assessments of 100 new asylum seeker patients at a GP surgery - 60% had suffered some kind of human rights abuse! And most of them hadn't told their doctor, even when their health had been badly affected. It'll be exactly the same here, most people don't want to talk about the awful things they've been through, they try to be positive..."*

*"For me it's about being wanting to be welcoming to people who are new to our community.."*

*"It's really interesting talking to the people who come to the drop in..."*

## What's changed this year?

As you know, this year there's been much more open hostility to refugees and people seeking asylum. Clients are more often telling us about hate incidents they've experienced personally, in Rossendale. People's need for support over the year has increased because of policy changes. In 2023-2024, there were hardly any asylum claims decided, but this year the Home Office has been making lots of decisions, both positive and negative. So there is lots more movement of refugees in and out of asylum accommodation in Rossendale. We are seeing lots of new arrivals, many people who suddenly have to move out of their accommodation, many who've become homeless, some who've had their asylum claim refused and don't have a solicitor – all need lots of help, and there's more need than ever for support services.

We've continued to grow. 181 new clients registered during the year, so that by July 2025 we had supported over 500 individuals. Our drop-in sessions have been 50% busier than a year ago with 45 – 50 people now attending each Wednesday. We've needed to rent more room space for the Wednesday sessions and since April we've for the first time have employed a part-time member of staff, who is making a huge contribution to our work. We tried running a regular advice session in Bacup, but found that ad hoc appointments work better. We've started logging most of the casework we do, and between April and July handled an average 125 requests for help each month. We've a new logo, a new website, and new IT systems. We've enjoyed some lovely social events too! Our costs have gone up enormously, and the work of running the organisation has escalated. Although we've recruited some great new volunteers, we need more money and more help!

## The future

We want to offer a secure, reliable service, adapted to our clients' needs, that is sustainable as long as it's needed. Our clients ask for more of the same – more activities, more staff, more sessions. Some of our volunteers would like to feel less overwhelmed. Clients and caseworkers would like to be able to access immigration advice. To achieve these things, we need money and more casework volunteers. We are working on fundraising and recruitment but are worried about our service's uncertain future.

## If you would you like to support our work...

We need people:

- Volunteers able to do casework
- Trustees with experience of fundraising, senior management, accounting or IT
- A qualified immigration legal professional able to provide monthly advice sessions.

And we need more funds:

- You can support us at no cost to yourself by doing your online shopping through the **easyfundraising website**: [https://www.easyfundraising.org.uk/easyfundraising-app/?causeId=389678&utm\\_term=CE947](https://www.easyfundraising.org.uk/easyfundraising-app/?causeId=389678&utm_term=CE947)

- You can also support us through the new East Lancashire Helping Hands Lottery, which opens 18<sup>th</sup> November: [https://www.helpinghandslottery.co.uk/support/rossendale-refugee-support-group?utm\\_campaign=cause-page-social-share&utm\\_source=cause-page&utm\\_medium=social&utm\\_content=Hyperlink](https://www.helpinghandslottery.co.uk/support/rossendale-refugee-support-group?utm_campaign=cause-page-social-share&utm_source=cause-page&utm_medium=social&utm_content=Hyperlink)
- And we are always grateful for individual donations – they make a real impact, and it's now possible to donate quickly and easily via our website: [www.rrsg.co.uk](http://www.rrsg.co.uk).

## Thanks

A big thank you to the many individuals and organisations who have supported our group this year. Thanks especially to our volunteers - we could not function without them and are deeply grateful to everyone who gives their time so freely. Thanks to our dedicated new employee, who has more than fulfilled our expectations of the post. And thanks to everyone else who has given support - what we offer to clients is only possible because of the amazing contributions and commitment of partner organisations - and of some generous individuals. We won't thank by name all those individuals who keep us going practically, financially and through moral support, but we hope you know how much your contribution is valued.

### Thank you to all the organisations that support our clients

(In alphabetical order and with apologies to anyone we have accidentally missed out)  
 The ABD centre, BPR Council for Voluntary Service, the Children's Adventure Farm Trust, CVM Church including CVM Kidstuff and CVM Storehouse, The Halo scheme, Haslingden & Bacup libraries, Haslingden Community Link, Horse and Bamboo Theatre, Lancashire County Council Refugee Integration Team, Lancashire Police, The Lighthouse, New Horizons, Newground Together, The National Lottery Community Fund, PEP, RAFT, Rossendale Borough Council, Rossendale Leisure Trust, Rossendale Rotary Club, Rossendale Valley Energy, Vodafone Charities Connected, Whitaker Museum and Art Gallery volunteer coordinators.

RRSG Trustees

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Registered charity number 1204240

[www.rrsg.co.uk](http://www.rrsg.co.uk)

07350 986104

[contact.rrsg@gmail.com](mailto:contact.rrsg@gmail.com)

c/o Haslingden Community Link, Bury Road, Haslingden BB4 5PG

