

# Refugee Advocacy, Information, and Support (RAIS Lancaster)

Trustees' Annual Report and Financial Statement (TAR) April 2021 to end March 2022

Charitable Incorporated Organisation, Registered Charity no. 1193811

Date: 24 August 2022

## 1. Objectives and Activities

### 1.1 Introduction

This report seeks to summarise the work and developments carried out by RAIS Lancaster during the year April 2021 to end of March 2022, which marks our first year of operation as a newly formed CIO (Charitable Incorporated Organisation).

Please see Addendum on the last page of this report for a summary of our activities covering November 2020 to March 2021 during the period of the Covid-19 pandemic when our activities were of necessity fragmented and limited.

### 1.2 RAIS's Charitable Purpose

RAIS exists for the public benefit, to provide relief and assistance to asylum seekers and refugees, and their dependants, in the Lancaster and Morecambe area, principally by providing advocacy, advice, information and support.

**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.

In the 12 months covered by this report we have provided responses to a total of enquiries 635 from 130 people. (Enquiries from families are counted as one person). This is more than double the number of both people and enquiries for the previous year. These figures were completed before there were any arrivals at the hotel(s). During this year the number of Home Office houses used for dispersed accommodation increased from 32 to 50.

### 1.3 Beneficiaries

#### *Asylum seekers*

Lancaster has until recently welcomed approximately 150 asylum seekers dispersed into Home Office accommodation in the city, comprising family and multi-occupancy houses, managed by Serco. The Home Office has recently (March 22) brought a further 220 asylum seekers to the city housed in initial accommodation in hotels.

#### *Refugees*

There are approximately 100 refugees and their families with leave to remain who have stayed in the area since their cases were decided over the last few years

## **1.4 Core Activities**

### ***Drop-in***

Our drop-ins take place at the Cornerstone Centre twice a week for two hours each. For most of the people served by the charity the drop-in is the first form of contact. Typically the drop-in is staffed by three volunteers and the paid worker.

Asylum seekers and refugees come to ask for help with a wide variety of matters, from the asylum process to benefits, housing, managing their finances, and educational issues. The charity does not provide legal or statutory advice but provides information and general advice and clarification about the asylum process, housing, referral and access to services and education, and signposts the enquiries as appropriate, including to other local organisations, social opportunities, and to Collingwood Immigration Services here in Lancaster. We help asylum seekers understand Home Office and Serco letters and emails, and refugees with finding housing, claiming benefits and seeking employment. We help both groups complete forms and communications online and we provide access to a translation service either in person or on the phone in a variety of languages. See section 2.1 for data relating to this activity, 2021/22.

### ***Advocacy***

Our advocacy work takes the form of accompanying people to interviews, making enquiries on their behalf where needed to the Home Office and to a variety of local agencies, including the local Housing Office etc. Our volunteers also accompany asylum seekers to legal appointments, to their Home Office interviews, and court appeal hearings. We also accompany refugees to local authority appointments at Housing, the Citizens' Advice Bureau (CAB) and the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP). We accompany both asylum seekers and refugees to medical appointments, advice centres, on school visits for their children, to the DWP and Local Authority offices. Our advocacy aims to ensure that people get where they need to go at the right time, understand what they are asked or told - and the implications thereof - and have their questions answered.

When people get a positive decision and leave to remain as refugees, we support them through the complex systems of housing and benefits with which they are not familiar. We help to find housing and furniture as well as helping them to move into their new homes and apply for and find work.

### ***Helpline***

We run a helpline four mornings a week from 10 am to 12 noon. It is staffed by the paid worker and volunteer coordinators. We receive enquiries from asylum seekers, refugees, members of the public interested in our work, and enquiries and referrals from other statutory and voluntary organisations.

## **1.5 Programmes**

Alongside the above activities which are central to our work, RAIS is engaged with the following:

### ***Outreach and Household Support***

RAIS Volunteers are allocated to houses in the area surrounding Lancaster to help new arrivals to orient themselves and access the services provided. We also provide longer term support for individuals and families with vulnerable members as well as multi-occupancy houses where

there are individuals with physical or mental health problems and disabilities. This latter aspect of the work is undertaken in collaboration with social and health and mental health services.

### *Housing*

On receipt of a positive decision and achieving refugee status we help individuals and families to find housing. All refugees are deemed to have a local connection to the area they were placed in by the Home Office and, generally speaking, are eligible for council support because they are at risk of homelessness once they get their letters from Serco giving them notice to quit. Families have a statutory right to housing and we help them to apply to the Council and find furniture and household goods and move into new accommodation. Single people have no statutory right to housing unless they can demonstrate vulnerability under the law, so we help them with the 'prevention of homelessness interviews with the Council and then support them in finding alternative accommodation. We assist with applications for benefits and the local housing allowance, and with household goods and moving expenses.

### *Leave to remain*

During the period covered by this review, the Home Office's activities were largely suspended because of Covid 19. Because evictions were illegal for much of this time, those asylum seekers who were granted leave to remain were able to remain in their Home Office accommodation throughout the pandemic. Relatively few people received a decision on their asylum case during this time. We were able to assist those who did to open bank accounts and to apply for Universal Credit, without the additional need to look for accommodation, but this demand has since re-started.

### *Family Reunion*

Despite the restrictions of lockdown and limited air travel, we were able to help four families reunite from Sudan and Iran in early 2021 to find homes and settle in. Since then, one further couple from Iraq was reunited in early 2022, and at present there are two more men waiting for their wives to arrive from Iran and Sudan respectively.

### *Mind the Gap*

This project seeks to provide hosted accommodation with members of the local community for refugees while they wait for their first payment Universal Credit. They are evicted from their Home Office accommodation 28 days after being given leave to remain, and have to wait five weeks for their first benefit payment. This project has been in abeyance over the Covid pandemic, but the charity is just finalising arrangements for relaunching it in conjunction with St Thomas's Church.

## **1.6 Welfare**

### *Transport costs*

In the last two years the Home Office has started to accommodate asylum seeker in outlying villages at varying distances from the city of Lancaster. However almost all activities and support for asylum seekers take place within the city, including our drop-ins, social and recreational activities, free meals information and help, legal representation, and English classes. Without additional funding in place to establish hyper-local hubs, the most practical solution has been to enable asylum seekers to travel into Lancaster to access such support. We have been able to utilise our unrestricted funding to buy bus passes for 10 to 12 such asylum seekers over the last year. In December 2021 and again in February 2022 we have applied for and received generous funds for the support of this project to alleviate transport poverty. We are now in receipt of

sufficient funds to continue this project until the autumn of 2022 by which time we will be in a position to attract further funds through fundraising events and donations.

### **1.7 Volunteers**

RAIS has 25 volunteers, including trustees, of whom twenty are actively engaged with the front-line work of the charity at any one time. Volunteers are asked to apply in writing and complete GDPR and Confidentiality agreements and once provisionally appointed, to undertake a basic DBS check. They are also given training in our policies, and Safeguarding and Confidentiality in particular, before beginning their work. Volunteers are then invited to shadow others at a couple of drop-ins in order to understand how the charity operates. The drop-ins are supervised by the paid worker who in turn is line managed by one of the trustees. Volunteers are offered both internal and external training opportunities and their work is reviewed regularly with a formal individual annual review after one year. All volunteers are required to abide by the agreed policies of the Charity while acting on our behalf.

In an average week volunteers will undertake an average of 24 hours of voluntary work across all activities. These comprise 4 volunteers at each 2-hour drop-in and 6 hours on accompanying, household support and advocacy of various kinds. The recently opened drop in for asylum seekers resident in hotels in Lancaster and Morecambe comprise another 6 hours a week. The trustees and officers of the charity, (treasurer and minutes secretary) are all volunteer and between them offer another 10 hours week on average the total is approximately 40 per week

### **1.8 Partnerships**

RAIS is part of a network of support organisations across Lancaster District, working to support asylum seekers and refugees. We are committed to effective partnership working to ensure the best possible outcomes for our beneficiaries. Our main partners are listed below:

- Lancaster City Council Asylum and Refugee Forum (MAF)
- Lancaster and Morecambe City of Sanctuary committee
- East Meets West
- Global Link
- St Thomas' Church Asylum Seeker and Refugee Support Network
- St Thomas shared hub for new arrivals each Wednesday
- Lancaster and the Bay Hygiene Bank
- The Olive Branch Food Bank
- Morecambe Bay Food Bank
- Citizens' Advice Bureau
- Lancaster City Council Housing Department
- Lancaster District CVS
- The Cornerstone
- Lancaster University
- Lancaster Methodist Church
- Christ Church, Lancaster
- Collingwood Immigration Services
- The Food Alliance
- Lancashire Youth Challenge
- Band of Brothers (BoB)
- The Sewing Café
- Lancashire Adult Learning

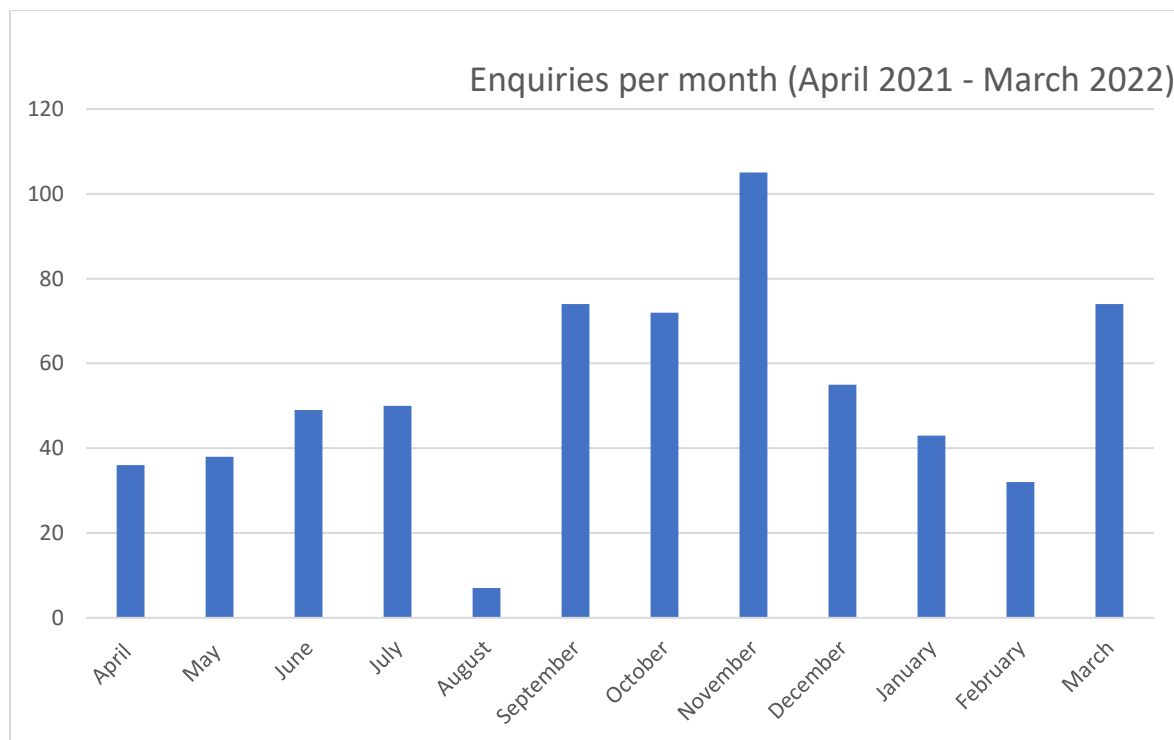
- Lancaster and Morecambe College

**Legal representation:** Following initial contact with us in late 2020, Collingwood Immigration Services has offered invaluable legal representation to our service users since February 2021. In July 2021 they opened their Lancaster office and invited referrals from us and from local asylum support organisations.

## 2. Achievements and Performance

### 2.1 Summary of Achievements:

In the year to 31st March 2022 the RAIS drop-in dealt with 635 enquiries from 130 separate individuals: 21 women and 109 men. (These figures do not include partners and family members.) This represents a 106% increase in the number of service users (from 63 in 2020). The number of enquiries (i.e. drop-in visits) was up 210% (from 205 in 2020). Figure 1 shows the numbers of enquiries dealt with each month (note: drop-in sessions were not held in August; instead urgent enquires were dealt with by appointment). The figures show a gradual increase in enquiries as Home Office activities resumed at the end of lockdown, peaking in the autumn of 2021.



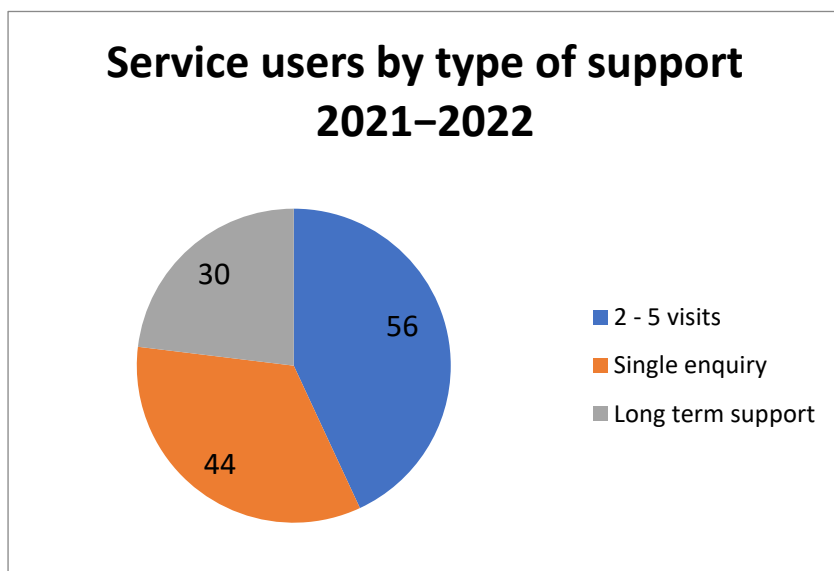
**Figure 1**

Of the 130 enquirers at the drop-in, 58 were asylum seekers and 72 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.

Some people come to the drop-in with one-off enquiries, some return several times, and many require on-going support over a period of weeks, as shown in Table 1. Table 1 and Figure 2 below show the breakdown of service users by the type of support given.

Type of support	Number
Single enquiry	44
2 - 5 visits	56
Long term support	30
<b>Total</b>	<b>130</b>

**Table 1: Service users by type of support**



**Figure 2**

We have had enquiries from people from 12 different countries. These are shown in Table 2 below. The largest group are from Sudan, followed by Eritrea, Iraq and Iran.

Countries of origin	Number
Sudan	36
Eritrea	28
Iraq	24
Iran	23
El Salvador	9
Albania	2
Nigeria	2
DRC	2
Yemen	1
South Africa	1
Pakistan	1
Turkey	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>130</b>

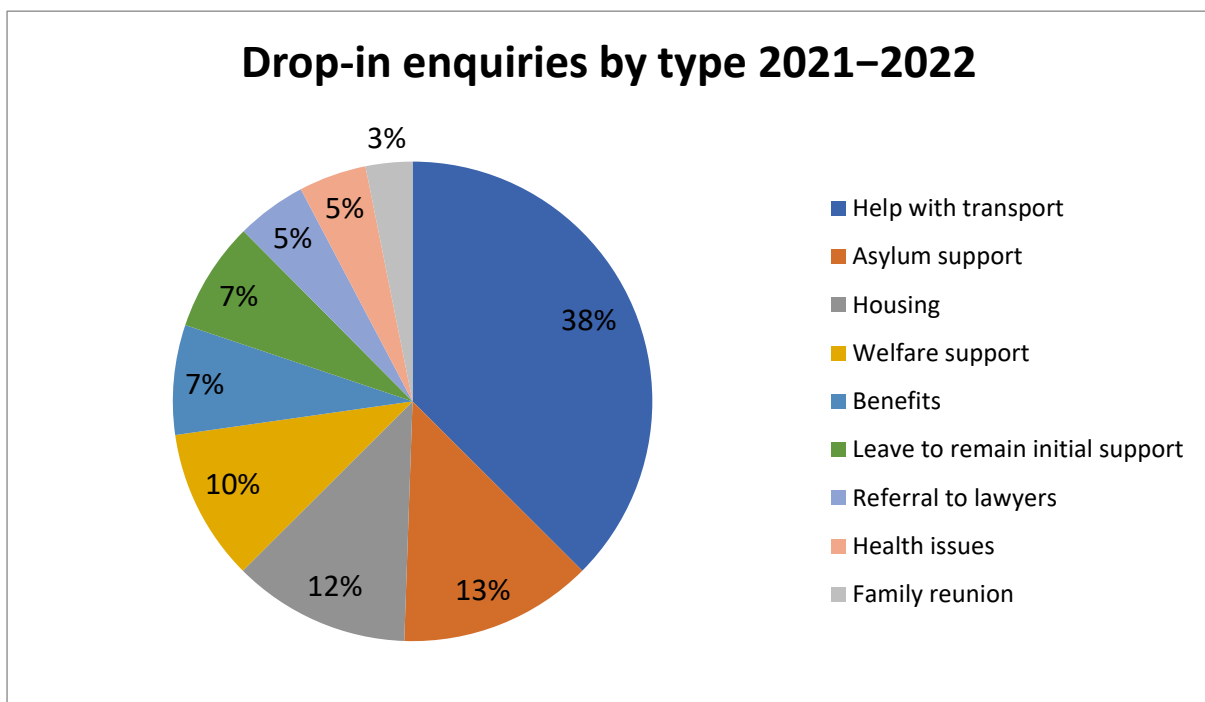
**Table 2: Service users by country of origin**

Enquiries cover a wide range of issues: Table 3 and Figure 3 show initial enquiries broken down by type. It can be seen that by far the largest category is requests for help with transport, due to the fact that asylum seekers are being housed in small towns and villages outside Lancaster. ‘Asylum process support’ includes everything from helping to understand correspondence from the Home Office and lawyers to volunteers accompanying people to Home Office interviews or appeal tribunals. Other large categories are housing, and other help with becoming settled after being given leave to remain (opening a bank account, claiming benefits, etc.).

**Drop-in enquiries by type**

Help with transport	238
Asylum process support	83
Housing	76
Welfare support	65
Benefits	47
Leave to remain initial support	47
Referral to lawyers	30
Health issues	29
Family reunion	20
<b>Total</b>	<b>635</b>

**Table 3: Drop-in enquiries by type**



**Figure 3**

### **Case study 1**

J came to this country from Sudan in 2019. Like many asylum seekers he arrived after a lengthy and hazardous journey having left his home in late 2016. He was referred to RAIS for help making an application for family reunion after he was granted leave to remain. His wife and four children, the youngest of whom hadn't been born when J left, arrived in October 2020 after months of difficulties and a last-minute setback in Khartoum where J's wife and children were initially refused access to the airport. Volunteers, working with Lancaster Council Housing team, helped them to find appropriate housing, settle the children into schools, register with doctors and find their way through the benefits system.

RAIS volunteers, continue to support the family as their life in Lancaster unfolds, helping them with visits from their landlords, accessing additional financial support as the economic situation for them, as for many families, deteriorates and helping with school liaison. The support requests are less frequent as the family make their own connections and develop their own networks, but RAIS remains an important back up service for this family.

### **Case study 2**

S was one of the first people to arrive at the Lancaster Hotel set up for asylum seekers. Unlike many of the men in the hotel who had arrived straight from the ports, he had previously been in a Serco House. This made his situation very different. He had lost his Serco accommodation due to his mental health and subsequent admission to hospital. He came to RAIS initially as his Aspen card had been blocked. However, it soon became apparent what should have been a simple call to Migrant Health was a much more complex case. As we began to try and help S we realised that he had suicidal ideation for which he had been sectioned. He was on anti-depressants and his doctor had requested that Serco move him to Liverpool where he had support. Migrant Help had refused this request and it was clear that S. was suffering greatly. His family had been directly targeted and his brother had been murdered by the Taliban in February, news which caused his mental health to deteriorate further. By working closely with the local health team, Lancashire County Council and the Serco safeguarding team we were able to help him secure accommodation in Liverpool close to his support networks as well as getting his Aspen card unblocked.

### **Case study 3**

This year many of our friends have been able to apply for Indefinite Leave to remain. Asylum seekers are initially given to leave to remain they are initially given leave to remain for 5 years. Pat, one of our volunteer coordinators, worked closely with Collingwood Immigration Services to seek advice on how to complete these applications and in January of this year we completed our first one. A. had been supported by RAIS previously when he was in Lancaster. Once he had been given initial leave to remain, he moved to Barrow where he worked as a chef in the hospitality industry. Knowing the support he had previously received from RAIS he contacted us for support. He came to the drop in where our volunteer Clive helped him to complete his application. On the 8th of July he received confirmation from the Home Office that his Indefinite Leave to remain. Another wonderful success story of how RAIS volunteers are making a real difference in people's lives.



## **Nowruz Celebration**

After a face to face training session with volunteers many of them expressed wish to have a social event involving staff, volunteers, trustees and the people we work with. Volunteers thought it would be good to see people outside the drop in a relaxed environment and atmosphere, giving them a chance to get to know people, not just see them as presenting problems. After speaking to some of the drop in users they told me that it was soon to be the Middle Eastern New Year. Many of them described this as being a key celebration and said how much they had missed being able to celebrate it. From this the idea of celebrating Nowruz was born. This was a first for RAIS and I think the volunteers and the asylum seekers pulled together to make it a great success. We were able to get funding from the Eric Wright Trust to pay for the food. Judith, one of our amazing volunteers, took them to Preston to buy all the ingredients, H organised some of the asylum seekers to prepare a traditional meal in the Cornerstone kitchen. P who had recently come over from Iran as part of the family reunion scheme set up a traditional Haft Seen table complete with the traditional dishes that she had brought over from Iran. The celebration was a great success with many of our partner agencies coming to join us. The refugees and asylum seekers from the Middle East were very emotional as for many of them it was the first time they had been able to celebrate Nowruz since leaving their home countries.

## **2.2 The Future**

Our running costs are now secured for until March 2023, largely thanks to the generosity of the National Lottery Awards for All. Funding is also in place to continue to employ the Coordinator/Development Worker until October 2023, thanks to The Fore, subject to a satisfactory report to them in August 2022.

We will continue to respond to the needs of the growing community of asylum seekers and refugees in the city and outlying areas. Our response to this is dictated by decisions made by the Home Office. The recent dramatic increase in asylum seekers and Ukrainian refugees in the area will shape that response for the future.

### **Our primary aims for the coming year are as follows:**

1. We will seek additional funding to a) increase our staffing capacity in the coming year to respond to the recent dramatic increase in the number of Asylum Seekers and Ukrainian refugees in the City, and b) to secure our core services beyond Oct 2023, to supplement the generosity of the The Fore.
2. We will seek to recruit and train an additional 6 volunteers to join us as our work expands with the continual arrival of new asylum seekers and the movement of the people we serve from asylum and to refugee status. This will be in addition to the natural movement of volunteers in and out of the charity.
3. We will seek to broaden and extend our membership base in order to extend our reach into the community and to benefit from a wider variety of backgrounds and experience.
4. We will continue to work in close partnership with the other AS/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.

5. Subject to securing appropriate funding, we will seek to develop a) our website to reflect the range of our work, improve accessibility and to help build sensitive public awareness of the issues facing AS/Refugees and b) an intranet for internal use, to streamline our information and communications.
6. We will also investigate ways of improving our record keeping by considering acquiring a case management system

### **3. Financial Review**

Financial performance of the charity in the year was considered satisfactory. For the Independent Examiner's report and Statement of Accounts see Appendix 2 (p.17).

#### **3.1 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 responsibilities for the remuneration of the Coordinator/Development Worker and for rental of office space. The aim is to maintain a level of free reserves of three months' budgeted expenditure as working capital. This is considered sufficient to cover short-term cash outflows, notice periods for contracts, etc. The level of free reserves required for this policy is currently £6000, but will rise shortly with the anticipated recruitment of additional administrative assistance and increased rental of further office space. This 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 of contracted employment in the unlikely event of being unable to continue.

#### **3.2 Current financial situation**

As reported to the trustees meeting on August 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2022, the charity is currently in receipt of Awards for All National Lottery funding for running costs until March 2023.

We have undertaken a successful monitoring and evaluation exercise with The Fore to secure the second tranche of funding for the first of our coordinator/development worker.

We have just appointed a second paid worker for a temporary contract for 3 months, funded by an unrestricted grant from the PLR Trust, to be extended subject to further funding.

We are undertaking a range of funding applications over the next few months to secure our financial future. We intend to apply to the Mobility Trust in the spring of 2023 for further transport support.

#### **3.3 Fundraising**

A Funding Sub-Committee has now been tasked with developing a funding strategy and submitting bids to potential sources of further core funding (as well as more local sources for the Welfare Fund), so that the charity has a steady income stream to secure sustainability of the ongoing work which has been demonstrated to be so necessary and building on a track record of exceeding targets set by grant-funding bodies. Most of the funds raised by RAIS Lancaster are from charitable trusts, underpinned by the work of the Funding Sub-Committee's strategy. There is fundraising from the public, not by direct marketing or using external fundraisers, but by public events, encouraging monetary and other donations from individuals for particular purposes (mobile 'phones and data, used computers, clothing, toiletries and hygiene products,

travel tickets/passes, etc.). We have not received any complaints from the public in relation to our fundraising activities.

### **3.4 Principal Risks and Uncertainties**

The Funding Sub-Committee of the trustees will assist with developing a risk management process to report to the Board of Trustees.

Main risks are:

- Failure to secure core funding beyond 2023 (mitigated by the funding strategy);
- Loss of key staff/volunteers (mitigated by active management and team building);
- Insufficient breadth of skills in the Trustee Board (mitigated by recruitment of new trustees and succession planning, annual reviews, etc.);
- Substantial change in Government policy and practice leading to a diminution in numbers of refugees and asylum seekers (unlikely to soften under the present administration, nor at present to harden so as to remove all demand for RAIS' services, and the effective turnaround time would give sufficient time to adjust what we deliver in response to a changed environment)

## **4. Structure Governance and Management**

### **4.1 Governing Document**

RAIS is an Association Model CIO, registered with the Charity Commission on 15<sup>th</sup> March 2021. The previous Committee of RAIS, as an unincorporated Community Association, decided to adopt a more formal structure, including incorporation, as the ambition was to grow the financial size of the Charity, and to employ our first paid worker, in order to deliver a professional and properly regulated service to our users.

A copy of our Constitution is included with the invitation to our first AGM.

In line with our Constitution, all serving trustees will retire at our first AGM; the Membership will vote to re-appoint those willing to stand again, and on any prospective trustees standing for the first time at that AGM.

### **4.2 Governance**

The Trustees meet regularly. During the twelve months covered by this report, [most] of our 5 meetings have been via Zoom and 1 face to face. We have put in place all the arrangements needed in order to undertake the employment of our first paid worker, who receives regular support and supervision. We have also been managing, with the Co-ordinator/Development Worker's excellent assistance, the return of 'in-person' services, ensuring proper Covid-19 precautions when necessary.

The Board of Trustees has also spent considerable time since the registration of RAIS as a CIO on drafting, discussing, and approving policies. Signed copies will be kept at the Cornerstone Centre, provided to new trustees, staff and volunteers, and will be available via our website in due course.

The following policies are approved and in place:

Safeguarding  
Confidentiality  
Volunteering  
Complaints

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion  
Health and Safety  
Disciplinary Procedure  
Grievance Procedure

### **Coordinators**

Elizabeth Hare, Kate Tordoff, Pat Allen, Fariha Blockley.

The role of the coordinator group is to manage the day-to-day business of the charity and make operational decisions. There is an overlap between trustees and this group to ensure consistency across the charity's activities. The coordinator group meets regularly to discuss operational matters and make operational decisions. Members of the group will take responsibility for some projects (e.g. the St. Thomas' hub for hotel dwellers as this falls outside the contracted hours of the paid worker) provide cover for sickness and holidays in order to ensure the smooth and uninterrupted running of the charity's activities. The group also manages the welfare budget within limits agreed by the Board.

### **4.3 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, but generally has 3 meetings of its Membership each year. 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 regular quarterly. The means of communication for members is via email and meetings are held either in person or on zoom.

We currently have 27 Members, most of whom were supporters of RAIS before we became a CIO. The trustees recognise that welcoming a wide cross-section of our community as Members is a key way to ensure 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.

### **4.4 Paid staff**

Funding was secured from The Fore in August 2021. Since October 2021 the Charity employs one paid staff member, namely the Coordinator and Development Worker (Fariha Blockley) appointed by the Trustees in October 2021. Fariha works 20 hours a week, and her hard work has enabled RAIS to take a real and much valued step forward in terms of our capacity and ability to meet the needs of our client group.

Fariha's role includes supervising and running the drop-in sessions, arranging, and monitoring advocacy and outreach work, as well as networking to create and maintain good working relationships with other organisations, both professional and voluntary, in the Lancaster and Morecambe area.

Beyond that she develops the work of the Charity and reviews and improves aspects of the service we provide for the asylum and refugee community in the area, advising and reporting to

the Board. She is currently supervised by the Chair of Trustees. The funding for her post is secured for two years until October 2023 subject to a report in July 2022 to The Fore.

With the recent dramatic increase in the number of Asylum Seekers and Ukranian refugees in the City, our resources have been stretched in order to meet demand for our services. In the coming year we will seek additional funding in order to increase our staffing capacity to respond.

## **5. Reference and Administrative Details**

**Charity Name:** Refugee Advocacy Information & Support, Lancaster

**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](http://www.rais.org.uk)

### **List of Trustees,**

Dr Elizabeth Hare (Chair) appointed March 2021

Kate Tordoff appointed March 2021

Maja Moeller appointed March 2021

Jacqueline Stamper appointed March 2021

Lisa Shrimpton co-opted July 2021

In line with our Constitution all trustees will stand down at our first AGM in July 2022, and those willing will stand again for re-election by our Members.

### **Other support**

Dr Pat Allen (Treasurer)

Sue Kiernan (Minutes Secretary)

Arti Naikwadi (Bookkeeper)

Shweta Pankhadiwala (Independent examiner, Lancaster CVS)

## **6. Thanks and Acknowledgements**

**Our grateful thanks are due to the following organisations for their support and collaboration**

North Lancashire CAB

Lancaster City Housing Dept.

The Future for RAIS Lancaster

East meets West Women's Group

Global Link

The Cornerstone and Lancaster Methodist Church

Lancaster CVS

Lancaster and Morecambe City of Sanctuary

The Olive Branch food bank and Morecambe Bay Food Bank

The Lancaster Hygiene Bank and Food Club

Collingwood Immigration services Lancaster office.

St Thomas' Church Lancaster

Christ Church Lancaster

Premium Linguistics Translation Service

Our volunteer and paid interpreters

**A big thank you to our Funders**

The Fore

Awards For All

The National Lottery Community Fund (made available during Covid- 19)

The Lancaster Community Fund and Urgent Response Fund, via Lancaster CVS

The Lancaster District Mobility Trust

The PLR Trust

**And finally**

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 and small items of furniture to toiletries and cleaning materials. We are very grateful to all who donate in response our appeals.

## Appendix 1

### Summary of activities during the period November 2020 to March 2021

November 2020 saw the last AGM as a constituted charitable organisation prior to registration as a CIO. Between then and March 2021 the service was restricted by periods of tiered and total lockdown as follows. During November and December 2020 Lancashire was in tier 3 which meant offering a restricted service. During the period January and February 2021 England was in total lockdown. In March 2021 we were able to start to resume our previous level of service.

However, during all of this time our helpline was available as usual and staffed by coordinators and volunteer as necessary for 4 mornings a week. We were able to offer doorstep support helping people to make appointments with doctors, explaining any correspondence they received, while observing the Covid-19 rules of social distancing, mask wearing and remaining out of doors.

In late 2021, the British embassies in Riyadh and Khartoum opened for visas, and four of our refugee families were reunited as partners and children arrived in the UK via the International Red Cross family reunion scheme. Our volunteers helped them to find housing using online communication with them and with the City Council. We were also able to assist them with removals and furniture, as contact for voluntary work was permitted in November and December.

We were also able to run minimal drop-ins during this time. We received 43 enquiries in November and 29 in December 2020; almost all from refugees who needed benefit applications and bank accounts completed and help with understanding household bills. There were other requests for phone top-ups and laptops to help children and adults to continue their studies. During these drop-ins we complied strictly with the Covid restrictions and risk assessments put in place by the Cornerstone Centre.

During this period we received a grant of £1000 from Lancaster District Urgent Response Fund , specifically to offer digital connectivity the form of phone top-ups and data. In the period of English national lockdown in January and February 2021 a further grant from the Lancaster Community Fund enabled us to collaborate with East Meets West to provide Covid safety equipment and cleaning equipment and materials to all the family and multi-occupancy houses in Lancaster. We helped to deliver these materials and encouraged people to take the proper and required precautions. We continued to use our then current core funding from the Walney Extension Community Fund for running costs for these months.

For almost all of the entire five-month period, Home Office activities in relation to asylum seekers were suspended. We were therefore giving what support we could by ensuring all the children were in school if possible, and that those who had mental health problems were offered support.

In March 2021, as lockdown was lifted, we received 82 enquiries. During both these periods (of tier 3 restriction and full lock-down) the enquiries were largely repeated visits from a relatively small number of people and nearly all refugees settling in after being granted leave to remain and applying for and getting Family Reunion via the International Red Cross, with the consequent

need for housing, schooling and benefit applications. Over the whole five months there were a total of 154 enquires at our drop-ins as well as much activity in terms of family and household support.



## **Appendix 2**

### **Independent Examiner's Report and Statement of Accounts**

**Independent examiner's report to the board of trustees of**

**RAIS Lancaster**

**Company No. Charity No. 1193811**

I report on the accounts for the year

1<sup>st</sup> April 2021 – 31st March 2022

**Respective responsibilities of the board of trustees and Examiner**

The board of trustees are responsible for the preparation of the accounts. The board of trustees consider that an audit is not required for this year and that an independent examination is needed.

It is my responsibility to:

- examine the accounts and
- to state whether particular matters have come to my attention

**Basis of independent examiner's report**

My examination has included a review of the accounting records kept by the organisation and a comparison of the accounts presented with those records. It also includes consideration of any unusual items or disclosures in the accounts, and seeking explanations from you as committee concerning any such matters. The procedures undertaken do not provide all the evidence that would be required in an audit and consequently no opinion is given as to whether the accounts present a 'true and fair view' and the report is limited to those matters set out in the statement below.

**Independent examiner's statement**

I note that the practice of those issuing repayment of bus fares is to round to the nearest whole pound sterling.

I have completed my examination. I confirm that no material matters have come to my attention in connection with the examination (other than that disclosed below \*) which gives me cause to believe that in, any material respect:

- the accounting records were not kept in accordance with section 130 of the Charities Act; or
- the accounts did not accord with the accounting records; or
- the accounts did 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.



Shweta Pankhadiwala  
Finance Officer LDCVS  
Lancaster

Lancaster District CVS The Cornerstone Sulyard Street Lancaster LA1 1PX  
25th July 2022

**RAIS Lancaster**  
**DETAILED INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT**  
**1<sup>ST</sup> APRIL 2021 TO 31<sup>ST</sup> MARCH 2022**

<b>Profit &amp; Loss Account</b>		<b>2021-2022</b>
<b>Income</b>		<b>£</b>
Grants	Note 1	17950.00
Donations		4855.50
<b>Total Income</b>		<b>22805.50</b>

<b>Expenditure</b>		<b>2021-2022</b>
		<b>£</b>
<b>Capital Expenditure</b>		
Laptop		799.00
Phone		625.27
Printer		259.99
<b>Staff expenses</b>		
HMRC		496.93
Recruitment		452.20
Pension		381.46
Salary / Wages		4704.48
<b>Office Expenses</b>		
App Printing		67.20
Stationery		116.46
Internet		177.29
Zoom		86.34
<b>Other</b>		
Bank Charges		47.99
Rent		3555.00
Storage		1307.50
Insurance		278.49
Interpretation		1142.56
Client Welfare Fund	Note 2	7761.56
<b>Total Expenditure</b>		<b>22259.72</b>

<b>Profit /(Loss) for the year</b>	<b>545.78</b>
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Profit /(Loss) on the year(All Funds)	546
Balance at start of the period	18,110
Balance at end of the period	18,656
<b>Carried Forward</b>	<b>£ 18,656</b>

**RAIS Lancaster**  
**Notes**  
**1<sup>ST</sup> APRIL 2021 TO 31<sup>ST</sup> MARCH 2022**

<b>Note 1</b>	<b>2021-2022</b>
<b>Grant</b>	<b>£</b>
URF	1000.00
The Fore	13450.00
Lancaster District Mobility Trust	1500.00
PLR Trust	2000.00
<b>Total Grant</b>	<b>17950.00</b>

<b>Note 2</b>	<b>2021-2022</b>
<b>Welfare Fund</b>	<b>£</b>
Aspen Card	1121.00
Food	80.00
Medical	57.70
Other	408.99
Travel	6020.30
Bank	73.57
<b>Total Welfare Fund</b>	<b>7761.56</b>

<b>Note 3</b>	<b>2021-2022</b>	<b>2020-2021</b>
<b>Bank</b>	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>
Current Account	12,220.32	17,966.15
Savings Account	6,000.00	0.00
Cash on Hand	435.40	143.79
<b>Total</b>	<b>18,655.72</b>	<b>18,109.94</b>