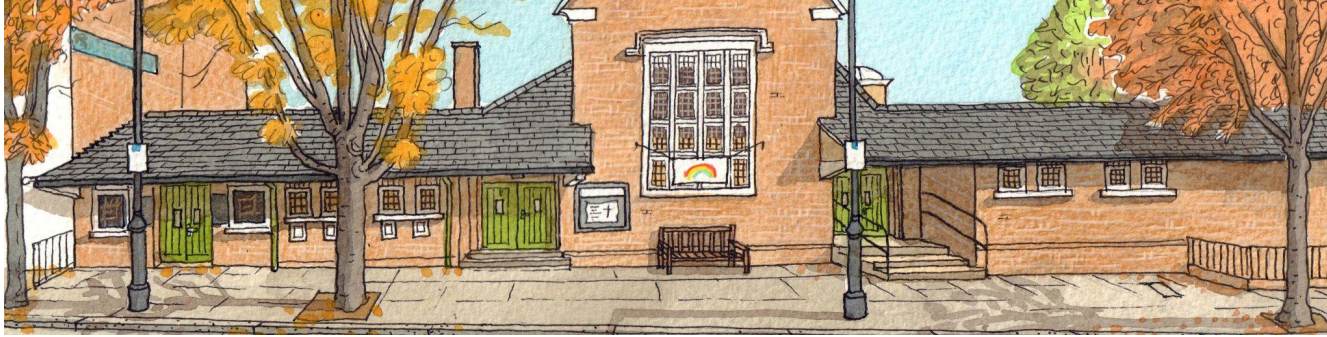


Islington Centre for Refugees and Migrants



Strategy 2022-25



1. WHERE WE ARE NOW

At the Islington Centre for Refugees and Migrants we work with people who have been displaced by war and conflict and come to the UK seeking sanctuary and a better life. Our mission is to offer people the emotional support, practical tools and sense of community they need to be happy and have a decent quality of life in the UK.

We are currently working with 186 people from 43 countries world wide.

We offer activities and services:

- ONLINE through Zoom, phone calls and social media
- IN-PERSON at our Centre on Wednesdays in Cross Street and recently started on Tuesdays at Christ Church, Highbury

We have a team of nine staff and around forty volunteers who work hard to help all our clients.

We are working with our board of trustees, guided by Chair Victoria Rae, to develop this three year strategy to ensure that we continue to help our clients in the best way possible.

Strategy Process:

We have been working with a consultant to develop this collaborative strategy. Starting with a trustee vision day, we have consulted across our community with clients, volunteers and staff to set our objectives and take us through the next three years.

2. VISION, MISSION AND VALUES

Vision

We envisage a world where refugees, asylum seekers and migrants are integrated fully into their new communities with equal access to opportunities to progress their lives and fulfill their potential.

Mission

Our mission is to offer people the emotional support, practical tools and sense of community they need to be happy and have a decent quality of life in the UK.

Values

- **Offering a warm welcome to all who come to us**
- **Working together to put the client first**
- **Care and compassion**
- **Respect and dignity for all**
- **Learning and improving our working model from our own learning**
- **Showing grit and determination to be here for our clients**

These values underpin our work and have been identified through practice and self review. These are the values that we have built our model on and the values that have ensured commitment from funders and the successes attained by the clients. They are derived from direct experience from the clients and are openly and often presented to us by the clients in response to the practical work we do with them. It is these values that motivate the commitment of the staff, volunteers and wider supporters of the charity.

3. WHAT WE DO

We provide a range of activities and services to people who come to us in need. We welcome refugees and migrants who have been displaced from their countries of origin, wherever they have come from, whatever has happened in their lives. We talk with them, listen to what they need and respond to that. Whether someone tells us they need English lessons, advice on housing, accessing healthcare, applying to college or any of the many challenges of being a migrant in London – we are here for them.

Our Clients

Our clients are refugees, asylum seekers and migrants who have come to the UK seeking sanctuary. Each year we work with around 180 people. This year our clients originate from 43 countries around the world including the Democratic Republic of Congo, Turkey, Syria, China and many others.

Clients live across London, either in hostels, with friends, in Government accommodation or with refugee hosts. A large number of the people we work with each year are asylum seekers, some of whom have fallen into destitution because of their immigration status. For example, currently 70% of our clients are asylum seekers and of those more than half (58%) are destitute. As clients become part of our community, we build a relationship of trust and they feel empowered to ask for help from our Support Service.

The Activities and Services we currently offer

We offer a hybrid service of online groups, sessions, classes and support which run throughout the week and in-person support on the In-Person Centre days. Services include:

- **A warm welcome** and a sense of community at our Centre every Wednesday and at the Christ Church location on Tuesdays.
- **English language** lessons to improve people's language skills and to give a sense of community and connection. We strongly believe that overcoming language barriers is key to allowing people to integrate in their communities.
- **Support Service** to provide support, signposting and referrals to help overcome and resolve clients' issues including asylum, housing, homelessness, destitution and health.
- **Support Packages** to provide asylum seekers in destitution to access essential food, phone and data top ups, travel and other essential items.
- **Online and In-Person Activities** including art and writing, gym, choir, yoga, book group, information sessions with external partners, dance and community trips that build fluency and confidence in speaking English.
- **Digital Inclusion** to help people to feel confident online through: (i) providing phones/laptops to those without equipment, (ii) assistance by phone or online to help people use equipment and IT and (iii) assistance with digital issues at our In-Person Centre days
- **Individualised support** where each client is allocated a 'group leader' who is there as a point of communication and who will check in with them by phone if they are unusually absent, displaying signs of mental distress or seem particularly quiet or reserved during a session
- **Hot food** and lunches at our Centre on Cross Street in Islington every Wednesday.
- **Donations** of toiletries, food and clothes at our Centre every Wednesday.
- **Access to sanitary products** and other related items through our partnership with Bloody Good Period and through donations at the Centre on a Wednesday.

4. OUR STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES:

1. Develop a Strong Organisation to underpin the work and enable the Centre to be the best it can be

To achieve objective 1 we will...

- Develop the Board including reviewing our effectiveness and recruiting new trustees, improving diversity and including people with lived experience.
- Have in place a Trustee development and succession planning policy.
- Create an HR policy for staff including remuneration scales, training and development and annual appraisals, consulting with an HR specialist as needed to help us implement and develop HR for our growing team.
- Review our organisational structure to ensure it works most effectively both strategically and for day-to-day operations.
- Professionalise the way we gather information for monitoring and evaluation, including further developing our Service User Involvement and implementing a new database CRM, Lamplight.
- Review our premises to ensure we are able to deliver all our in-person activities and services.
- Build capacity within our fundraising in order to secure and diversify our funding base and allow us to continue to develop in a responsible, sustainable way. Recruit an additional part-time fundraiser.
- Develop our engagement with volunteers and ensure we are creating the best possible experience.
- Develop our Theory of Change to include the **Client Journey**, the impact of the Centre's work and the change we want to see.

2. Provide Activities and Services for our clients to help relieve the issues they face and enable them to reach their potential

To achieve objective 2 we will...

- Develop our English Language learning opportunities
- Support clients through **insecure Immigration Status**
- Improve and nurture **communication** skills
- Relieve **isolation and loneliness**
- Relieve and prevent **poverty**
- Encourage **physical wellbeing**
- Nurture and support **emotional wellbeing**
- **Empower** clients with practical knowledge and skills

To do this we will:

- Offer a range of activities and services both online and in-person.
- Offer a Support Service to help clients overcome barriers to learning and personal development.
- Progress our OISC (Office of the Immigration Services Commissioner) accreditation from Level 1 to Level 2.
- Offer a range of English based classes and develop an individualised English language programme to engage clients in goal based learning
- Provide a range of therapeutic based enrichment activities in response to client need and request.
- Link with partner organisations to give opportunities to clients to experience life in the UK
- Increase our in-person Centre Days from one a week to two a week whilst maintaining our online work which proved so effective during the pandemic.
- Secure funds for our Support Package programme.
- Continue to develop our Digital Inclusion Programme.
- Consult with clients to create a feedback loop that enables us to confidently be delivering what clients want and need.
- Review the possibility for a solicitor or legal adviser.
- Be responsive to new and emerging areas of need for example financial literacy or new support needs.

3. Build our profile and our partnerships to share the work we do and to increase support to carry it out.

To achieve objective 3 we will...

- Link with Partnership Organisations to share and present the work we do and help others to understand the challenges faced by refugees and asylum seekers.
- Cross refer with organisations who can offer services which are not part of our expertise.
- Build relationships with existing and new Charitable Trusts and Grantors to attract support to fund the work we do on a multi year basis.
- Develop our digital strategy to increase awareness of the work we do and attract new donors.
- Hold events to celebrate and share the work within our community.
- Share good practice where this can help other organisations.

5. NEXT STEPS

- We will develop our annual work plan from these strategic objectives and set key identifiable milestones to measure our progress.
- We will review our work at key points and feed new learning back into the work plan to ensure we are on track to achieve our objectives.

Our impact as described by our client, Joseph:

"I would like to use this opportunity to show my appreciation and gratitude to Islington Centre for their help and support I have been receiving from you, the staff, and volunteers at the Centre over the years.

Honestly, I don't know what would have become of me if it wasn't for the financial; education and immigration advice; mental wellbeing support; and other proactive group activities, including an open-door policy by Islington Centre for all Refugees and Migrants.

Islington Centre has been a coping mechanism for my mental health and wellbeing, due to harsh and inhumane immigration policies which creates an hostile environment targeted at Refugees and Migrants.

The biweekly support package I received from Islington Centre has tremendously been a life saver that has saved me from depression and mental breakdown.

I also want to thank Islington Centre for helping me gain admission into college to improve my IT Skills (ICDL), develop new intrapersonal Skills, and increase my confidence level.

The Islington Centre has been a solid bed of rock of support for me and indeed many other clients that shared the same lived experience as me. With that I'd like to say a big thank you to all the benevolent staff, volunteers, and of course this could never have happened without the warm kind-hearted generosity of esteemed fundraisers, Trustees, and financial contributors.

Because you cared, Refugees, Migrants, and Asylum seekers registered with Islington Centre were able to weather the storm of a hostile environment.

I am immensely grateful for the support!"