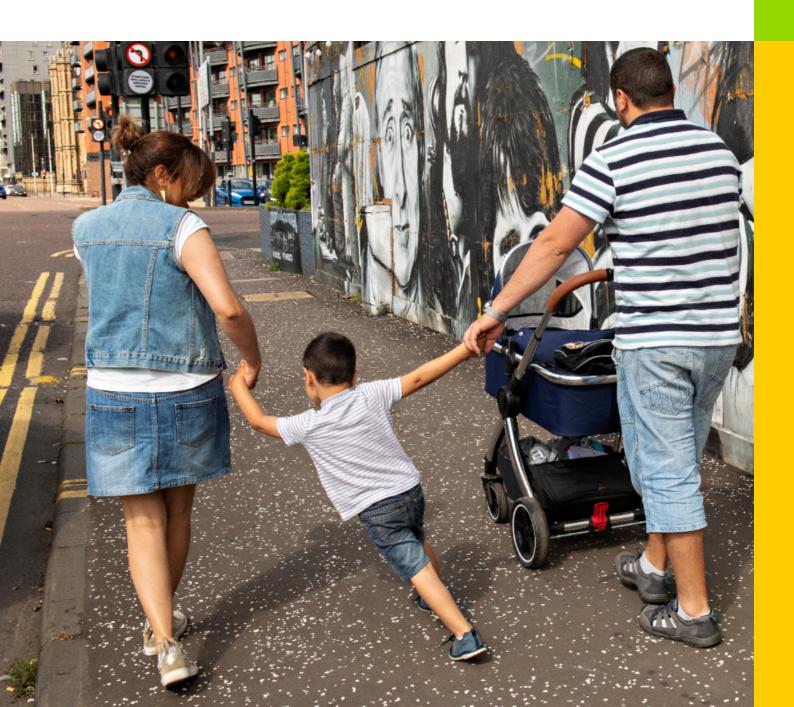
## RST Refugee Survival

Trust

## ANNUAL IMPACT REPORT

#### **REPORT AND FINANCIAL STATEMENTS 2020-2021**

Report of the Directors



## **OVERVIEW**

The Refugee Survival Trust (RST) Board members, who are the directors and trustees of the charitable company, are pleased to present their report and financial statements for the year ended 31 March 2021.

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## **VISION & MISSION**

The **vision** of RST is of a welcoming, inclusive, safe Scotland for refugees and people seeking asylum, where all live free of destitution and have the means and opportunities to realise their full potential.

RST's **mission** is to provide refugees and people seeking asylum with practical support when it is most needed, build connections between people and use what we learn to campaign for change.

## **OUR VALUES**

Refugee Survival Trust is committed to:

- promoting equality, social justice and social inclusion;
- upholding human rights;
- always behaving with honesty and integrity.

To uphold these values, we will act in ways that:



achieve high standards of effective professional practice and proper evaluation of our work;



are adaptable and innovative in response to need;



ensure that our processes are transparent and properly evaluated;



work in partnership with any individual or organisation operating in the same field sharing complementary aims and values.

2020/21 has been a year like no other. This annual report provides an overview of the work that RST has accomplished in the most challenging of times. The impact of Covid-19 will have a deep and lasting effect on how we work and on the life and wellbeing of everyone involved with RST.

More widely, it will have a profound effect on how refugees and people seeking asylum in Scotland experience voluntary and public services. Covid-19 has amplified inequalities that were already present in our society, and this will be reflected and considered in our future work.

I am deeply grateful to everyone who has worked so hard during this crisis to support some of the most vulnerable people in society.

Like every other organisation around the globe, RST has had to significantly change the way it operates in response to Covid-19. Our work has moved away from physical meetings and the office to make more use of virtual meeting with colleagues. We have refocused our activities to help us better understand and manage the implications of Covid-19 on our work and on the people we support.

We will be reviewing our strategy during 2021 to reflect the changing circumstances that Covid-19 has created. Whatever the future brings, we remain as keen as ever to continue our crucial work. We have listened to stakeholders, our partners and service users and have carefully considered what our focus over the next few years should be. Key features of our future work will continue to be the prevention and alleviation of destitution, to highlight inequalities and to advocate for a statutory safety net in Scotland.

We will oppose the UK Government's Nationality and Borders Bill based on the need to protect fundamental human rights aligned to the European Convention on Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (ECHR) 1950, and the 1951 Convention guaranteeing refugee's human rights and its 1967 Protocol. We will continue to collaborate and campaign to influence positive asylum policy change, all with a clear focus of the impact of the pandemic on communities and individuals.

We prepared for the consultation period on the UK Government's Nationality & Borders Bill, released in May 2021. We are extremely concerned that the bill will have a devastating effect on the people we support, potentially pushing more people into destitution in Scotland. We will provide full details in next year's annual report, 2021-22.



13 May, Glasgow Southside: Pollokshields protest, successful in stopping the Home Office dawn raid where they aimed to forcibly deport two men of this community on the Muslim holiday of Eid.

Our small, dedicated team was strengthened throughout the year by recruiting our first Chief Executive, Elaine Cameron, in September 2020.

We welcome this organisational development.



We also welcome Ajmal Yamin, who became our Treasurer and was appointed on 6th August 2020.

We would like to thank directors who resigned during the year for volunteering their time and for their contribution.

Abdulbaset Alsaban - Treasurer (Resigned 7 May 2020) Kirsty Morrison - (Resigned 17 September 2020) Mona Vaghefian - (Resigned 7 May 2020)

We've done a lot of work on our IT/digital Infrastructure, moving to a new supported and secure cloud-based system. We invested in new IT hardware to ensure we could continue our work remotely during the pandemic and to future proof the charity.

## Ways We Support

#### **COVID-19 Emergency Aid Fund**

We responded to the immediate needs of people due to COVID by providing an Emergency Aid fund. Working in new ways, our team worked additional hours to deliver cash and supermarket vouchers directly to those in need.

#### **Destitution Grants**

RST Destitution grants continued; however, the nature of delivery changed. We collaborated with other providers who had specific COVID funds to assist them in managing applications and logistically to deliver more cash to more people. We introduced contactless systems to distribute our grant aid, developing a safe and fast system of getting cash to people in need.

#### **DASS**

Our Destitute Asylum Seeker Service (DASS) project continued its unique multi-agency holistic approach to working with people seeking asylum and experiencing long-term destitution and homelessness. The project provides temporary and emergency accommodation, legal support, casework, and financial aid to help people move forward out of destitution. DASS funding is due to end in September 2021 and we have begun forward planning to continue to deliver necessary community-based accommodation, with the development of our new accommodation project proposal for 2021-24. Our team worked hard to make necessary adjustments to our accommodation provision to protect staff and clients during COVID. We were able to support people with managing lockdown, accessing vaccinations and testing kits.

#### **Everyone Home Collective**

We formally joined the Everyone Home Collective - a consortium of 34 voluntary and academic organisations, coordinated by Homeless Network Scotland who have created an ambitions strategy to end homelessness and destitution in Scotland.

## Ways We Support

#### **Bus Passes**

We continued the distribution of our daily bus passes to allow people, for example, to attend important meetings and get food. Mobility is crucial to the asylum application process and to be an active citizen in Scotland; however, this mobility was severely impaired by COVID travel restrictions. We learned from this that developing a wider travel network programme would be crucial in the COVID recovery phase and we began plans to widen our work in this area. We introduced contactless E-bus tickets and will continue to innovate in this area.

The Bump & Baby bus pass scheme, introduced in 2019, through which those seeking asylum who are pregnant, or who have recently had a baby, can apply for a 10-week bus pass also continued; again these grants were limited due to public health restrictions; however, we were able to support many parents to make necessary journeys for food, medical and midwife appointments, etc.



## Ways We Support

#### **Internship Scheme**

The Office Internship programme for people seeking asylum and refugees ended its third year of multi-year funding with good feedback and results. The programme moved online during the year due to COVID and we thank the interns and volunteers who took part during such a challenging year.



#### **Right to Work**

We continued to advocate and campaign for positive change on areas such as the Right To Work campaign, to support people moved to hotels in Glasgow and to influence UK and Scottish Government Policy in relation to providing adequate support for people seeking asylum and refugees during the public health crisis.

#### INCOME AND EXPENDITURE OVERVIEW

Our total income in 2020/2021 was



Over the same period our expenditure was



The income recognised this year included significant restricted income for the next cycle of DASS.

## **OUR AIMS**



 To focus particularly on contributing to the prevention and alleviation of destitution among refugees and people seeking asylum by meeting basic needs



 To increase opportunities for refugees people seeking asylum to be active citizens



 To contribute to policy and good practice for supporting refugees and people seeking asylum, with a focus on destitution



To raise awareness and campaign
 on the issues facing refugees and people
 seeking asylum, particularly destitution,
 and for a more humane asylum system

#### HOW WE ACHIEVE OUR AIMS



# • To focus particularly on contributing to the prevention and alleviation of destitution

- We ensure the delivery of destitution support and information provision to enable people to meet their basic needs;
- We seek to expand our capacity to provide short term accommodation for destitute people seeking asylum, and support for those in any form of temporary accommodation;
- We work in partnership with a range of organisations in order to provide practical support to people who are destitute and to prevent and alleviate destitution.

## To increase opportunities for refugees and people seeking asylum to be active citizens.

- We provide Access to Education & Employment support to remove barriers which can prevent people from moving forward in their lives;
- We provide a range of volunteering opportunities in order to support and promote integration;
- We seek to ensure that refugee and asylum seeker voices are included in all aspects of our work.







- To contribute to policy and good practice for supporting refugees and people seeking asylum, with a focus on destitution.
- We use data and evidence collated from our work to influence policy and practice in relation to destitution;
- 2. We develop clear messaging and clear policy positions, building on our expertise in this area;
- We work with partner organisations within
   Scotland and across the UK to influence policy and
   to ensure a strong voice for advocating solutions
   to destitution.
- To raise awareness and campaign, on the issues facing refugees and people seeking asylum, particularly destitution, and for a more humane asylum system.
- We continue to improve our digital and print communications to raise awareness of our work and relevant key issues;
- We support staff and volunteers to organise, deliver and speak at events to promote our work and raise awareness of key issues;
- 3. We engage with the media and support refugees to have their voices heard wherever possible.

## **COVID-19 EMERGENCY AID**

The impact of the COVID-19 health crisis in 2020 meant that many community-based support services providing a vital lifeline to destitute people, refugees and people seeking asylum were compromised as the country went into lockdown.

In response, RST launched our Emergency Aid Fund, open to refugees and people seeking asylum in Scotland, providing financial support for essential living expenses, phone, fuel top ups and essential travel.

RST developed referral partnerships with local refugee supporting organisations including Asylum Seeker Housing (ASH), Govan Community Project (GCP), Central and West Integration Network (CWIN) and Freedom from Torture. New partnerships were formed with grassroots groups: African Challenge Scotland and Glasgow Afghan United.

The fund ran for 12 weeks, from May to July 2020, and during this period, RST provided support to 731 households, a total of 979 people.

Emergency Aid Fund Partnerships	Number of applications
RST	261
Community Infosource	221
African Challenge	154
Mears	22
Unity Centre	22
UK Islamic Mission	21
Freedom from Torture	14
Radiant and Brighter Community Interest Company	6
Castlemilk Baptist Church	5
Interfaith Glasgow	3
TARA Service	2
Total	731

Breakdown of Grant Types			
Living Expenses	Travel	Phone top-ups	Fuel top ups
706	654	676	224

### **COVID WINTER SUPPORT FUND**

After a short period of respite over the late summer and autumn, lockdown returned, creating more challenges for the people we work with as shops closed and drop-in services continued to be suspended. With Scottish Government funding, RST developed a winter support programme. The programme provided financial support via supermarket vouchers to assist with the purchase of winter clothing, phone top ups and local essential travel over the winter period. The proposal was targeted at people seeking asylum living in hotel accommodation with no access to cash, people seeking asylum living in the community and people subject to No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF) conditions and unable to apply for support elsewhere.







## **COVID WINTER SUPPORT FUND**

The project ran from November 2020 to February 2021. Over this period RST worked with five partners to distribute over 500 supermarket vouchers and phone top ups, along with bus vouchers for adults and children.

Partners	No. of Individuals	No. of Families
African Challenge Scotland	10	90
Glasgow Afghan Utd	55	45
ASH	98	2
CWIN	64	36
RST	30	21
GCP	128	76
Total	385	270

#### Breakdown of people supported:

People Seeking Asylum	People with NRPF	People living in Hotels	People in Community based accommodation
60	40	0	100
100	0	55	45
100	0	100	0
100	0	33	67
50	1	0	51
189	5	20	174
599	46	208	437

The total of funds distributed across all of our COVID aid work was in excess of £129,000.

#### DESTITUTE ASYLUM SEEKER SERVICE (DASS) PROJECT

The Destitute Asylum Seeker Service (DASS) has been operational for six years, working with people seeking asylum who are homeless and living without financial support. DASS continued to operate during lockdown with legal support, casework and advocacy moving to telephone-based services. Night shelter and temporary accommodation services continued to operate and adjusted in line with public health guidelines. Referrals to DASS dropped during this period, as people who would otherwise be street homeless and destitute were provided with temporary Home Office accommodation on public health grounds. Despite this, over the course of the year, DASS worked with 160 new service users.

#### Key achievements and performance for 2020-21:

- 120 people stayed at the night shelter
- 9 people stayed in community-based temporary accommodation
- 35 people worked with the law clinic team
- 49 people were referred to specialist health services / social work services
- 185 people were referred to food services
- 85 people were assisted with Section 4 applications to return to Home Office accommodation
- 184 destitution grant applications were made
- 8 people achieved Leave to Remain status

#### **Temporary Accommodation Case Study by CN (DASS Project)**

"Living in the flat has been very useful for me. I was made destitute and for a few months I had nowhere to go. When I was offered a place in the Springburn flat, it meant that I didn't have to worry about being homeless while I waited for my fresh claim to be submitted by my solicitor. I have a roof over my head and the cash every week and the bus tickets help me because I do not get any support from the Home Office at this time. I look forward to when I will be able to live in my own flat again and have my own stuff with me, but in the meantime, I am glad that I am able to live in the flat." \*CN's fresh asylum claim was successful.

#### **Strathclyde Law clinic case study (DASS Project)**

The client was from a Northern African country and claimed asylum based on their sexual orientation. They were unsuccessful and sought the services of the law clinic. We assisted them to obtain several helpful witness statements, and documents evidencing their involvement in various LGBT organisations in Glasgow. This was sufficient to allow them to lodge a further fresh claim. The claim was passed to a solicitor in September 2019. The claim was submitted shortly thereafter, and the claim was granted around 14 months later. The client said: "I am delighted that I can live like anybody else and am excited to recommence my studies. Thank you very much for everything the law clinic has done for me. I wouldn't be able to make it without your help."



#### **DESTITUTION GRANTS**

For the past 25 years, RST have been providing destitution grants to people seeking asylum and refugees up to six months after they are granted refugee status, as a safety net when they receive no other type of support. 2020-21 was an unprecedented year and the type and operational activity of our grant giving changed in nature to respond to the COVID crisis. We employed different methods of distribution, as most existing face-to-face methods were closed or unworkable due to COVID. We engaged with additional and new partners and increased staff hours to deliver this aid. We also partnered with the British Red Cross who made specific funds available to provide hardship grants during 2020-21.

In 2020-2021 a total of 246 grants were approved, a significant decrease compared to previous years, as our usual work was effectively replaced with our COVID emergency programmes. Out of those 246 grants, 241 were destitution grants while only 5 were travel grants, reflecting the drastic reduction of travel due to COVID-19.



of all grant applicants were experiencing homelessness.

Applicants from Iraq comprised

the highest number of applications,

at a proportion of 16.2%.

The following Word Cloud is a visual representations of

RST applicants' countries of origin for all grants. In the

Word Cloud the number of grants

Kenya Sierra Leone

Kenya Sierra Leone

Ethiopia Venezuela

Uganda Palestine Cameroon

Chad Jordan Guinea Congo Algeria

El salvador Namibia | Congo Georgia Ghana

I Tanzania India Eritrea Kuwait

I

is indicated by the size of the country's name.

## **BUS PASSES**

We continued to deliver our travel grants, as mobility is crucial to the asylum application process and enables people to be active citizens within society. COVID travel restrictions and lockdowns had a significant impact upon this programme, face-to-face meetings such as legal and Home Office substantive interviews were suspended in 2020-21. Most face-to-face services, including food banks and social activities, were suspended; however, we were able to support necessary travel when restrictions were lifted at various points in the year.



#### **Bus tickets - Partner feedback**

"We continue to make very good use of the bus passes and tokens. One client whose mental health was particularly fragile and had suicidal thoughts advised the ability to travel by bus and then walk back to their Accommodation had helped them immensely. The freedom to explore their new city combined with the walk was therapeutic and had helped with low mood. We have also developed a walking group, using the tokens to get into town. The group has taken photographs of Glasgow landmarks including useful places as part of the asylum process. These photographs have been shared with others along with the details of the bus route."

## BUS PASSES - BUMP & BABY

Our Bump & Baby Bus Pass scheme continued to be a vital support for parents during times where travel was possible and necessary to allow people to get to the food bank, get their children outside and to attend any important meetings and, of course, for their wellbeing.

#### Financial Year 2020-2021

A total of 62 x 10-week bus passes (£119/each) were given out.

62 x



= £7,378

The month with the highest expenditure was June 2020, with a total of £2,737.

Out of those 62 mothers:

- 37 were single parents (60%)
- 1 had a physical health condition
- 2 had a mental health condition
- 22 had other children (35%)
   [Total number of other children: 33]



## ACCESS TO EDUCATION & EMPLOYMENT GRANTS

Refugees and people seeking asylum who want to study, or work can apply to RST for an Access to Education and Employment grant of up to £150 to overcome any barriers to starting a course or a job. Such costs might include translation of qualifications, course materials, exam fees or travel to college or interviews.

#### Financial Year 2020-2021

We awarded 54 grants, totalling £6,615

40% were to people seeking asylum



60% were to refugees



61% had at least one child



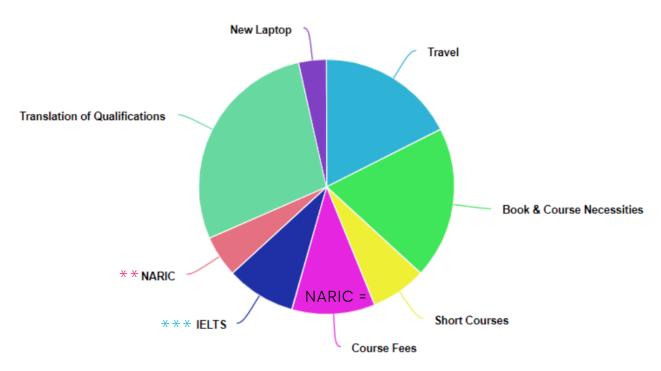


13% of those applicants were single parents.

## ACCESS TO EDUCATION & EMPLOYMENT GRANTS

Uses for these grants varied:

#### Financial Year 2020-2021



\*\*UK NARIC Statement of Comparability is an officially recognised document that confirms the recognition of an overseas qualification and its comparable level in the UK

\*\*\*IELTS, or International English Language Testing System, is a test for people who are going to stay in English-speaking countries because of immigration, education or practical training. The exam allows determining the level of English of a person for whom it's not the native language.



## OFFICE INTERNSHIP PROGRAMME

The Internship programme concluded in March 2021 in its third year of multi-year funding. Through the programme we've welcomed people seeking asylum and refugees into our office as interns for sevenweek placements.

We had to adapt the programme due to COVID, our office being closed in line with public health measures. Initially the Community Engagement Officer kept in touch with participants by telephone and email, supporting them during the pandemic and reducing social isolation.

The programme moved online with renewed focus from 1st April 2020 and had 10 participants in total from countries including Pakistan, Nigeria, Afghanistan, Jordan, Syria, Iran and Palestine. We included a new element to the programme this year through individually tailored one-to-one professional career coaching sessions, which we received fantastic feedback from.

The interns' work included research and a series of interviews capturing refugee journeys. Their work made an invaluable contribution to RST.

#### Destinations following completion of the programme:

- 2 enrolled in college
- 2 enrolled in university
- 4 continued to look for work and added the internship experience and certification to their CVs
- 2 remained active volunteers with RST

## RESEARCH & ADVOCACY

## STATISTICAL ANALYSIS / DATA

We collect an incredible amount of data through our different programmes, which provides an invaluable insight into the extent and causes of destitution amongst refugees in Scotland. We use this analysis to provide evidence for our research, updates for our partners, stories for our press releases and as feedback for our own work and how we can improve our current services.

## **INFLUENCING POLICY**

RST continues to conduct and commission research and participate in the national policy debate on asylum. It has had significant success in bringing about changes in procedures affecting refugees and people seeking asylum.

#### RESEARCH & ADVOCACY

## DASS RESEARCH -

## How can we prevent destitution?

During the year, RST worked with DASS partner British Red Cross on a piece of research exploring how destitution among people seeking asylum could be prevented. Four peer researchers were recruited, each with direct experience of the asylum process. The researchers carried out 26 in-depth interviews with people at various stages of their asylum journey.

An online 15-minute survey was also created and made available across the whole of the UK, asking a range of questions about people's experience of the asylum process, including legal support and interaction with the Home Office. Questions were also asked about financial hardship and destitution. The 135 responses received are now being analysed.

Interim findings indicate that the first six months of people's experience in the UK has a significant impact on their welfare and can impact on their knowledge or where to seek help when it is needed. Many people reported that they didn't receive a warm welcome to the UK, which affected their relationship with the authorities and made them more reluctant to approach officials for help. Lack of information about where to seek help and being moved multiple times were also identified as factors that increased the risk of destitution. The importance of the third sector in supporting people through hardship and destitution has also come through strongly.

The final report is now being written up and will be published with recommendations in October 2021.

#### RESEARCH & ADVOCACY

## PRO BONO ECONOMICS ADVOCACY

RST commissioned a piece of advocacy work with Pro Bono Economics, an organisation which supports small and medium sized charities to influence and inform policy by using economic analysis. The project focused on the financial cost of asylum appeals.

RST has long been concerned with the high percentage of initial Home Office decisions being overturned on appeal, a strong indication of poor decision making. This is not only an unnecessary cost to the UK taxpayer but also causes huge distress to people needing to undergo the process. Over the five-year period 2013-2017 there was an average of nearly 4,000 asylum cases per year that were successfully appealed following an initial rejection.

The report will be used to support RST's policy and campaigning work. arguing the case that organisations such as RST should be better funded to provide a more stable environment in which refugees can prepare their case for asylum first time round and avoid the emotional and time costs of the appeal "merry-go-round" system.

#### Specifically, this work will provide:

- A quantified, monetary estimate of the costs incurred by taxpayers from the additional administrative processes required for all successful appeals.
- A qualitative assessment of the potential knock-on consequences to taxpayers from increased demands for services from refugees facing increased mental distress from delays in the process and Refugees unable to access the labour market.

We expect to complete this work by the end of August 2021 and disseminate the findings.

## **EVENTS & FUNDRAISING**

Unfortunately, we were unable to hold any in person events in 2021-21 due to the COVID pandemic. We held our 2019-20 AGM virtually and would like to thank the people who contributed and our members for their continued support.

2020-21 was a difficult year for all of us and our overall funding decreased; however, we were fortunate that so many donors and funders stepped up to the challenge to provide funds to support refugees during the COVID Pandemic.

Grants and Trusts accounted for most of our income, and we would like to thank all funders for their support. We would also like to thank the Scottish Government for their emergency COVID funding.

Donations from individuals made up about 20% of our total income. RST is grateful for the continued support of dedicated members and people who passionately want to help refugees.

We joined up with the Glasgow Community Lottery, 'Yaldi' this year - a new, fun way for good causes to raise money. People can choose to support RST while getting the chance to win the £25,000 jackpot. Tickets are available online and cost £1, with 60p of that going straight to RST as a selected good cause.

We continued to receive vital donations through Local Giving

Thank you to everyone who has supported us through such a difficult year.

## **VOLUNTEERS & PARTNERS**

## **VOLUNTEERS**

The Charity is supported by volunteers, including its Board of Directors, who all provide their services on a voluntary basis and for this, the charity is indebted to them. We would like to acknowledge the significant and important contribution our Database Volunteers and Peer Researchers made in such a challenging year.



## **PARTNERSHIPS**

All our work is rooted in strong partnerships, including the DASS project and our grants programmes, which are all delivered via partners.

We continue to be active members in a range of local, national, and UK-wide networks, including the Glasgow Asylum Destitution Action Network (GLADAN), the Scottish Asylum Stakeholder Forum group (SASF) with the Home Office, the Third Sector Forum with asylum accommodation provider MEARS and the UK-wide No Accommodation Network (NACCOM).

## RESERVES POLICY

The Board of Directors regularly reviews RST's reserves policy. The pandemic and changing social economic impact have created new risks. The reserves calculation was revised on this basis, and we have worked to increase unrestricted reserves in alignment with up-to-date risk management and mitigation processes.

It is Board policy to maintain a three-month unrestricted reserve of core funds. This allows RST to respond quickly and effectively to changes in legislation that significantly increase demand on funding. It also allows us to meet outstanding obligations should fundraising prove unsuccessful. Amounts held at 31st March 2021 were £49,000.

## **FUTURE PLANS**

RST will continue to fulfil our core purpose: destitution work, providing Accommodation, Destitution Grants, Access to Employment and Education Grants and Travel Grants. We will continue to lead the successful DASS project until the project ends in November 2021. We will transition to our new Accommodation Project in which we intend to increase our accommodation places and apply the learning from the DASS project as well as address needs and inequalities arising from COVID.



#### **FUTURE PLANS**

Generating income and achieving financial security with a focus on sustainability will be a priority in the coming 12 months, with significant multi-year funding ending in 2021 and demand for our support increasing. We will develop our fundraising plan and aim to diversify our income streams.

The Board and staff look forward to continuing its work and reviewing our strategic direction in the light of the impact of COVID. A renewed clear strategy will support future sustainability with the potential for growth. As part of this process, our new Chief Executive will improve the management structure of RST and work with the staff team to ensure we have a structure that supports organisational delivery and sustainability.

The Board, with its new membership, looks forward to completing its process of strengthening the organisation and plans to focus on the quality of its governance and make any changes that might be required to best support the development of RST. The Board will be prioritising the review of RST's financial situation and looking at measures to improve our reserves position.

## THANK YOU, FROM THE STAFF OF RST

# How we treat refugees reflects who we are



#WhoWeAre















