

# Leeds refugee forum



**Empowering refugee and migrant  
communities**

Leeds Refugee Forum (LRF) was set up in 2003. LRF envisions that refugees and asylum seekers in Leeds feel welcome and safe, are able to access support and are provided with every opportunity to rebuild their lives. We aim to enable integration into the wider community and to promote wellbeing and confidence.

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**Our Mission:**

**LRF is a voice for refugees and asylum seekers and a key resource for support for refugees and asylum seekers.**



**Support us:**

**Join our diverse community with refugees and asylum seekers from over 30 different countries.**



**Read through this booklet to see the opportunities for you to get involved in our important work.**



**Whether that be volunteering, donating or joining one of our many activities- we would love to see you!**

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# The Team



**Ali Mahgoub-  
Chief Executive**



**Kathy Saemian  
-Chairperson  
and Persian  
Advocacy**



**Raissa Mattana-  
Tech-lending  
Project  
Manager**



**Donna Gallier  
Advocacy  
Project  
Worker**



**Katia Spyrou  
Marketing and  
Communications  
Officer**



**Ranya  
Abdulateef  
Women's  
Wellbeing  
Project Officer**



**Hoi Yan Chan  
Tech-lending  
Project worker**



**Inna Onopriyenko  
Ukrainian  
Project worker**



**Khair Rudd  
Education  
Officer**

## ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages)



LRF hosts a number of ESOL classes throughout the week that are open to all members from the community and public. ESOL provides learners with the English skills necessary for day-to-day life in the UK.

It is also a great way to meet new people and connect with others in the community and from other parts of the world. We have Entry Level, Beginners and Intermediate classes, alongside a conversation class run by the STAR society from the University of Leeds.



**"I like the class, my teacher and I see my English Improving".**

**ESOL Student**

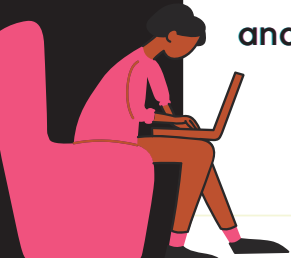
## Youth Group

LRF Youth Group have been running a project for our younger members of the community. We offers free one to one academic support for Year 7 to A level students. The group includes sports, visiting events and recreational activities which are co-run by our dedicated and diverse volunteers who come from both professional and student backgrounds.

Post lockdown, we have continued to offer our one on ones through Zoom. We work closely with students, schools and parents from households that experience numerous barriers including language and integration.



Your manner of teaching is wonderful and refreshing. You are patient and supportive and really know how to motivate your students and great at building confidence and keeping lessons fun and engaging through a variety of activities that improve conversation, writing and reading. Keep doing the good things. We are glad to have you beside us!"  
Mr Helemicheal parent of 2 students.



## Homework Club

The Homework Club is a weekly drop-in session supporting children from Year 1 to Year 7 with English and Maths. The club offers a safe and supportive environment for children to have fun, develop their skills, confidence and make friends from various community.

Both Parents and Students are very engaged with Social activities like active games, quizzes and celebration. Our sessions are co-run by our team of dedicated volunteers that comes from our local universities and from the education sectors.



"First of all I want to say a huge thanks for your hard work in supporting my children as they develop their skill and knowledge. I really appreciate you. It is helpful. It has been a great experience which can help my children to revise their lessons properly. They honestly would have never passed their exam if it was not for your help!

Teame- Service User and Parent of children at the Homework Club and Youth

## Tech-lending Project

The Tech Lending Community Project has been partnering up with several temporary accommodations to tackle digital exclusion by providing tablets with 15GB monthly data and unlimited calls/SMS.



The project's main objective is to integrate destitute persons into the broader community by sharing opportunities and tools that only virtual and digital devices can offer.



### Agnès' Story:

**Agnès is in a Care Home, and often visiting the hospital due to very advanced cancer treatment. Having a tablet is both a way to keep her mind occupied and also to have an opportunity of using the device for distance learning English.**

## Advocacy support

We offer a bilingual advocacy service that enables clients to access services and achieve their full rights and entitlements in relation to Health and social care services, welfare benefits, tax credits, housing, debt and financial management. We accomplish this by supporting clients to communicate their needs, fully understand what is available to them and engage in negotiating service provision.

Our advocates guide individual clients through this process aiming to develop awareness and understanding, together with the confidence and skills that will help clients towards independence. Our service runs everyday.

### Idrees' Story:

Idrees came into LRF for housing support as where he was living was not suitable for living. Our advocacy support team were able to find him new housing. He said:

**“I've now got the property in a great area. Thank you so much for your support. I have no words to express my gratitude.”**





## Women's Wellbeing Group (Art Therapy)

LRF offers a bi-weekly women's wellbeing group that runs for two hours on both Thursdays and Fridays. It provides art therapy in the form of the chosen activity, whether this be sewing, knitting, crochet, embroidery. These sessions improve our service users' confidence and act as an open space to discuss any issues that may have come up throughout the week.



### Helaleh's Story:

'When I came to the UK I couldn't speak any English and the Women's Wellbeing Group and ESOL lessons have helped me build my confidence and now I am volunteering for the women's group and helping to run it!'



## Phone Support Project

The project's main objective is to integrate destitute asylum seekers and refugees into the broader community by sharing opportunities and tools that only virtual and digital devices can offer.

Through promoting digital inclusion, we also enable our service users to feel more connected in their local and global communities, particularly with their loved ones.

We run this project in partnership with LASSN and the Good Things Foundation.

**Saleh's Story:** Saleh was referred by PAFRAS, an asylum seeker with no access to credit on his phone. He was very happy and grateful for having the opportunity to access credit and internet and call his family back home.



## Ukrainian Support Services

Since the beginning of March 2022, we have welcomed many Ukrainian refugees into Leeds and so we have been ensuring that there is support available for them. This includes: yoga wellbeing classes; ESOL classes four times; and Ukrainian advocacy services. This is being led by Inna, our newest member of staff.



## The Hardship Fund

Each winter a group of voluntary organizations in Leeds operates a Hardship Fund to provide limited financial support to those in greatest need. The fund provides small subsistence donations to destitute asylum seekers who have no income at all (for a single person, £25 per week, £40 for a couple and usually for 4 weeks maximum).

The Fund is managed and run by Leeds Hardship Fund Steering Group, which comprise representatives of referral organizations (PAFRAS, British Red Cross, Meeting Point, Solace, LASSN and RETAS) and Leeds Refugee Forum (LRF) who manages the Fund but does not make referrals.

## We Are Digital



LRF in partnership with We are Digital provide digital support for those who need help with online application for the EUSS, Windrush Compensation Scheme, HM Courts and Tribunals Service (HMCTS), DWP Appeals Homeoffice and many more.

We focus on supporting individuals who do not have the digital skills or equipment and those who face language and literacy barriers to fill out forms independently online.

People can access support via:

Telephone: 03300 16 00 51

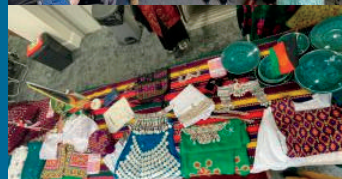
Online: [we-aredigital.co.uk/hmcts-user](https://we-aredigital.co.uk/hmcts-user)

Email: [support@we-are-digital.co.uk](mailto:support@we-are-digital.co.uk)



## Leeds Refugee Week

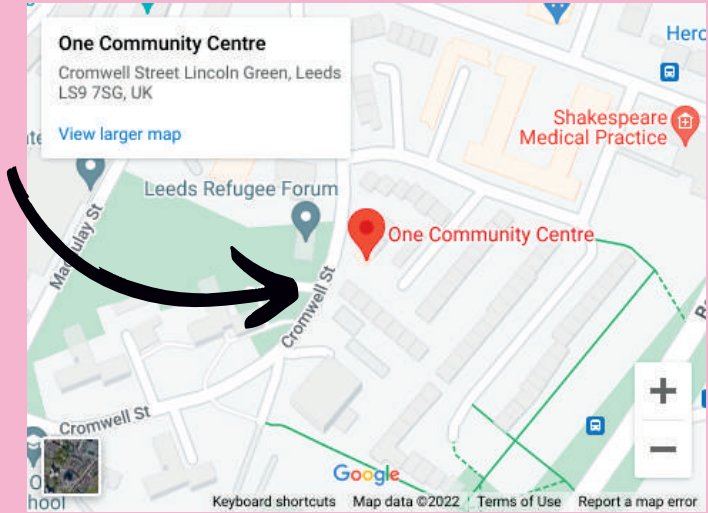
Refugee Week is an annual event celebrating the contribution of refugees to the UK and encouraging people to take a more positive look at asylum-seekers and refugees. Performances and awareness-raising events take place across Leeds bringing people together from all backgrounds to enable interaction and sharing of experiences and culture through food, arts and activities and to encourage understanding across communities.



Leeds Refugee Forum coordinates Refugee Week events in Leeds each year in partnership with refugee communities, agencies, refugee organisations and Leeds City Council.

The programme includes many activities for all ages across Leeds so you can get involved in many ways.





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Leeds Refugee Forum



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**We look forward to  
seeing you soon!**

