



MANCHESTER REFUGEE SUPPORT NETWORK

THE SHARED ROUTES PROJECT
IMPACT REPORT 2022

**FEELING VALUABLE, CONNECTED
AND WANTED BY THE COMMUNITY**



WELCOME STATEMENT

I am very proud to introduce you to the Impact Report for our Shared Routes Project which has been running since early 2019. We created this important service in recognition that refugees and asylum seekers have much to offer to their local communities, and yet are often in an isolated position. Shared Routes has been supporting refugees and asylum seekers to understand what volunteering is and support them to volunteer in local organisations. We call people who have completed our training programme ‘peer navigators’. The project has managed to keep running and supporting people during the many challenges of the Covid pandemic through adapting to online and remote working.

This report presents the project’s impact – the longer term benefits of the service - over and above the project outcomes which we have been successfully monitoring throughout the project. Our evaluator has talked to: peer navigators who completed their training and initial volunteering from the early days of the project up to about a year ago: voluntary and community organisations who have hosted peer navigators as volunteers; other local organisations who have developed strong relationships with the project. The impact is reported for individuals, for organisations (including MRSN) and for communities.

The Shared Routes impact demonstrates a successful approach to supporting refugees and asylum seekers to become involved in their local communities. We have also identified ways in which we can develop the project as it moves forwards, through continuing with hybrid ways of working, increasing our geographical reach, and continuing to respond to the individual needs of peer navigators.

I would like to thank all the staff, refugees and asylum seekers and voluntary and statutory agencies who have supported the work of Shared Routes. And I hope you find reading the report enjoyable and informative.

Belay Kahsay, Manager, Manchester Refugees Support Network



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THE SHARED ROUTES RATIONALE AND SERVICE MODEL

THE NEED

Refugees and asylum seekers can be isolated both because of where they have been dispersed to live, often deprived areas, and local attitudes. They frequently don't know people with their own or similar background. They want positive, non-hostile relations with the wider host community. Refugees and asylum seekers have a lack of suitable opportunities to volunteer to help themselves and others currently encountering similar issues. Many local organisations have little involvement of refugees and asylum seekers.

WHAT THE PROJECT DOES

- Peer Navigator Training Programme – a 6 session course to train refugees and asylum seekers in issues about UK systems and organisations and volunteering. The course was initially delivered in local community venues (with transport and food costs covered), then adapted to online delivery due to the Covid pandemic.
- Identify suitable volunteering opportunities both generally and for specific Peer Navigators, building on individual strengths and in their local area
- Support Peer Navigators into volunteering and during placement if required, usually for 3 months, but in many cases longer than 3 months.

Work has been focussed in three Greater Manchester boroughs: Manchester, Salford and Tameside where there are significant numbers of refugees and asylum seekers.

PROJECT OUTCOMES

1. Increase in volunteering in local organisations by Peer Navigators
2. Peer Navigators have increased confidence, skills, and understanding of how UK agencies and communities function
3. Increased capacity of MRSN and refugee community organisations through the Peer Navigator network
4. Increased engagement of Peer Navigators with the local community

STAFF

The Shared Routes team has 3 multi-lingual part-time staff from diverse backgrounds, all of whom have individual or family experience of the asylum process.

REFERRALS

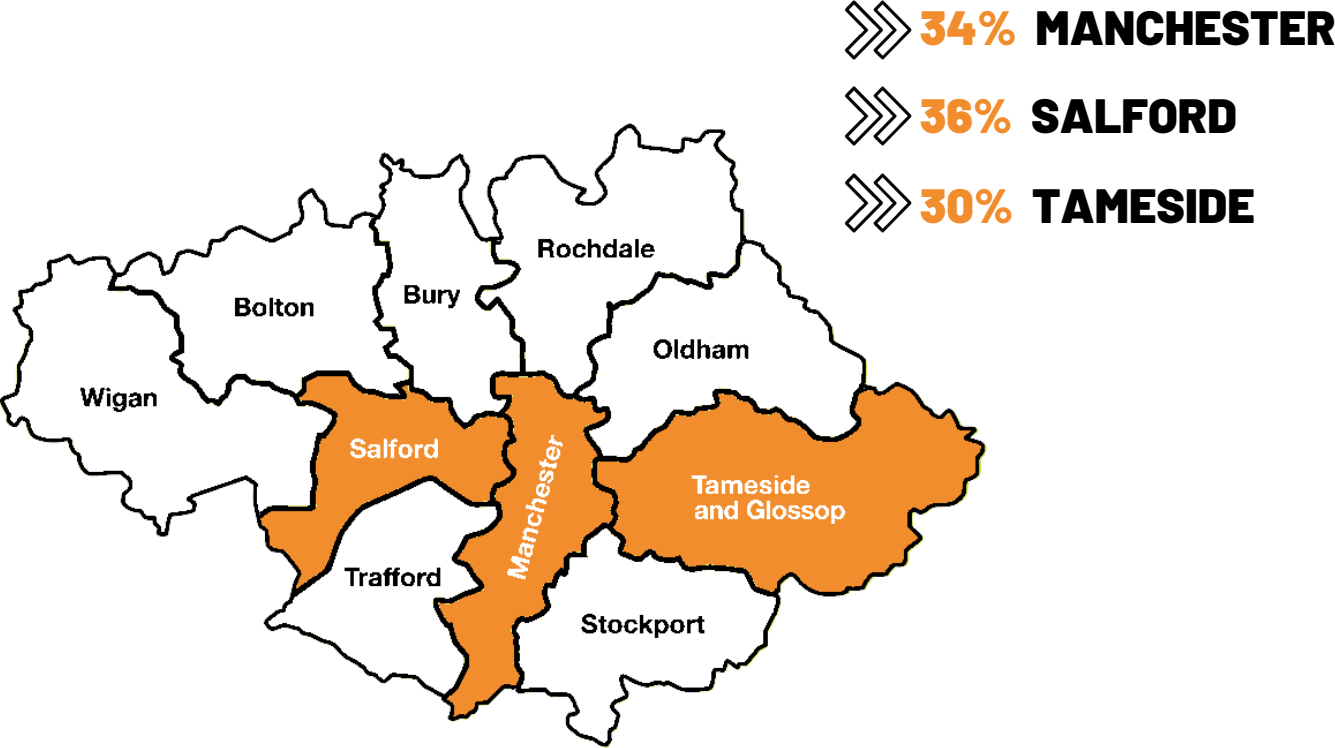
These come from a range of statutory and voluntary sector providers that MRSN and Shared Routes have built connections with. A strong link has been made with colleges providing English to Speakers of Other Language (ESOL) classes.

MRSN SUPPORT

As a project of MRSN, Shared Routes can rapidly internally signpost people to other services they may need, for example for help with immigration, finance or housing issues.

KEY STATISTICS:
JANUARY 2019 TO MARCH 2022

220 TOTAL NUMBER OF REFUGEES AND ASYLUM SEEKERS TRAINED AS PEER NAVIGATORS

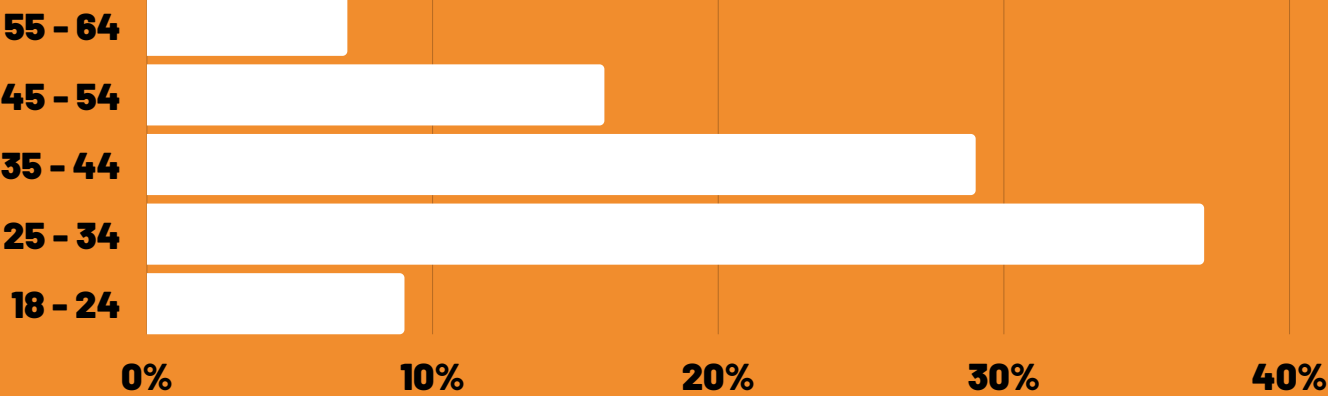


36% MALE 64% FEMALE

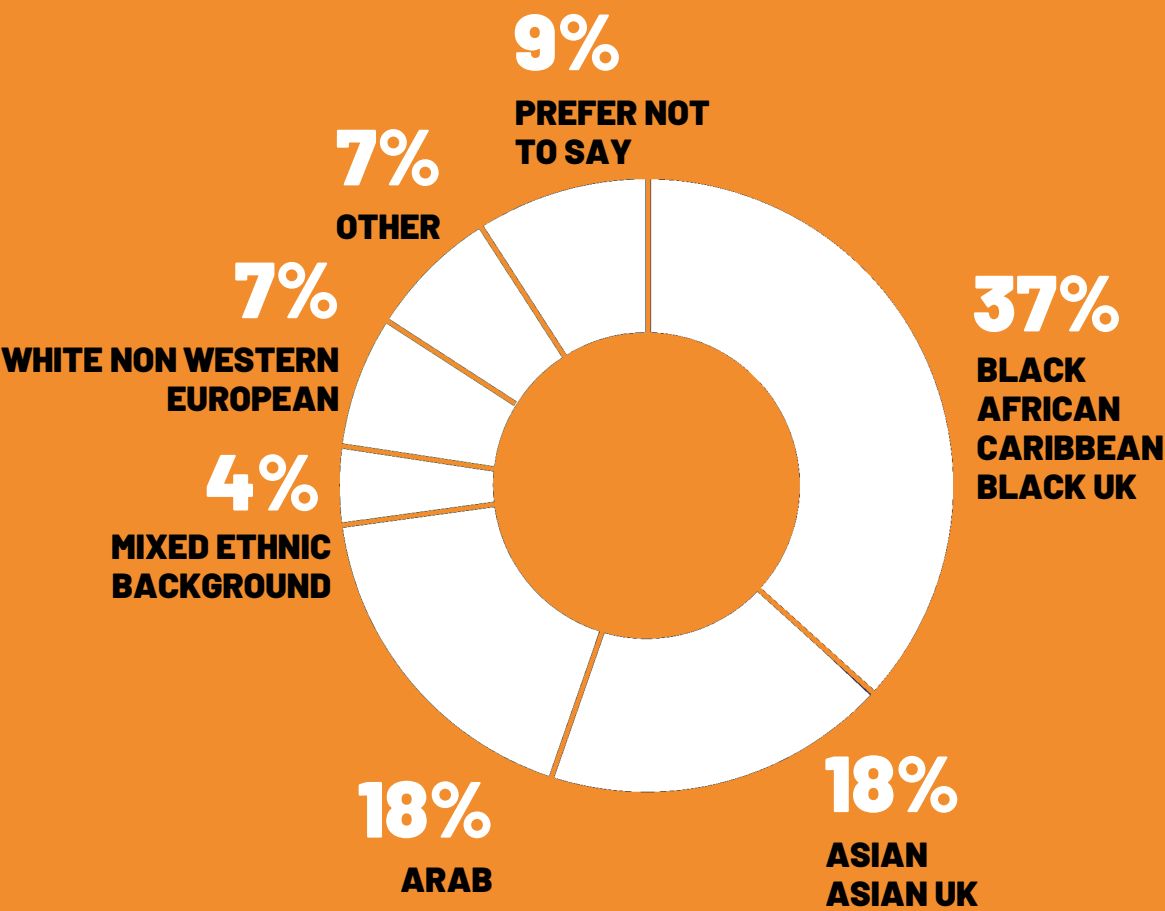
8% OF PEER NAVIGATORS ARE DISABLED

47% OF PEER NAVIGATORS ARE PARENTS/CARERS

AGE BREAKDOWN



ETHNICITY BREAKDOWN



SEXUALITY BREAKDOWN



IMPACT ON INDIVIDUAL REFUGEES AND ASYLUM SEEKERS

Peer Navigators who have completed the Shared Routes training have achieved outcomes as measured by the project at the completion of the training course and summarised below. Many then go on to become volunteers in a range of organisations, and some have gained employment. The project continues to have an impact on Peer Navigators as they move forward with their lives.

OUTCOME: Peer Navigators have increased confidence, skills, and understanding of how UK agencies and communities function.

- | | |
|---|-----|
| • Improved skills development | 96% |
| • Improved knowledge and understanding of UK agencies and communities | 96% |
| • Improved confidence | 85% |

It is worth noting that the people who didn't improve confidence considered themselves already confident.

OUTCOME: Increased engagement of Peer Navigators with the local community.

- | | |
|---|-----|
| • Cultural awareness of UK and other RAS cultures | 92% |
| • Choices and opportunities for engaging in society | 92% |

Peer navigators are regularly involved in supporting project development, for example with the training programme and the project's future plans.

During the Covid pandemic Shared Routes has also offered well-being support to peer navigators:

- Peer support groups (2 groups with a total of 16 peer navigators)
- Mental health awareness online sessions (One peer navigator who is a certified mental health first aider assisted with the design and delivery)
- Yoga sessions (designed and delivered by a peer navigator and video recorded)
- Online fitness sessions (designed by a staff member who is a certified sports coach and delivered with peer navigators)

"We transform their mentality towards volunteering. Many of them don't see the sense of volunteering and by the end of the training they really understand that this is valued highly in the UK and can make an impact on their future life."

SHARED ROUTES TEAM MEMBER



INCREASED SOCIAL INCLUSION OF REFUGEES AND ASYLUM SEEKERS

Peer Navigators, staff and external organisations have reported the following key aspects:

- Contributing to society through volunteering and working
- Making friends and/or having colleagues
- Increased confidence to speak in English

Other aspects mentioned include:

- Taking up education opportunities
- Developing the confidence to go out of their home

"Before the Shared Routes course which I did about 2½ years ago, I was staying in my home and not going out. I was anxious and I didn't want to socialise or talk to anyone. I had no friends. My mental health was not good. It was good for me to meet with different people at the training. I did volunteering at the Salvation Army. The training and volunteering gave me the confidence to go out and start meeting people. It opens doors for you. I have made a lot of friends at the course and through the volunteering. Now I go out very often and am not isolated. My mental health has really got better, it's really helped me a lot. Now when I've been out and come home I feel so much better than before. I feel that will continue. I feel more valuable to the community. Volunteering helps me to feel wanted. For example, the Salvation Army at the end of the year they give all volunteers a £25 voucher just to say thank you. And it helps me a lot to build on my skills and experience. In future, if I get my papers, the volunteering will have helped me. I might be able to get work, it will benefit me."

YVONNE, FROM MALAWI

"In this country everything is new and it's difficult to come out of that position and see choices. People have talent and know their background and experiences but they don't know how to use it to build things here. With the course and volunteering they can come out their house. It's much better than sitting in the house watching TV."

TRUSTEE, SOMALI ADULT SOCIAL CARE AGENCY

"It's really valuable that people can have opportunities through Shared Routes. We want people to be able to move on in their lives. If they landed here 3 years ago and don't have those chances [while they wait for their papers] people end up stuck. They're still human beings with aspirations. While we're all running around sorting out the practical bit, that other bit is important. I imagine it's been incredibly important to those people."

PARTNERSHIPS OFFICER, ACTION TOGETHER

INDIVIDUAL REFUGEES AND ASYLUM SEEKERS HAVE BUILT A POSITIVE LIFE AND MAKE POSITIVE CONTRIBUTIONS TO SOCIETY

Peer Navigators, staff and external organisations have reported the following key aspects:

- Improved mental health
- Increased self confidence
- Contributing to society through volunteering and working
- Building knowledge, skills and experience
- Improved social networks
- Identifying/achieving longer term personal ambitions or sense of purpose
- Increased confidence to speak in English

Other aspects mentioned include:

- Being independent
- Encouraging others to get involved with Shared Routes and/or volunteering

Jobs that Peer Navigators have gone to include: office administrator, taxi driver, social care assistant, restaurant staff.

Peer navigators have gone into education to study: interpreting, functional skills, mental health, psychotherapy, Maths, English, business management

"The feedback I have received [from people who have done the programme] has been amazing. It has a positive impact on the mental health and wellbeing of refugees and asylum seekers. It contributes to enhancing people's confidence levels and self-esteem. It gives people knowledge and skills so they can have better life chances and an improved quality of life."

ESOL COORDINATOR, TAMESIDE MBC



"They have the chance to learn and practice English - that's what most want. You can see improvements. They improve their social interactions through talking with customers and other staff members. They become more involved with time and more and more part of the store."

STORE MANAGER (SALFORD), BRITISH HEART FOUNDATION



"If they get leave to remain then through Shared Routes they've built their skills and they've got more chance of getting a job which is exactly where we want people to be."

PARTNERSHIPS OFFICER, ACTION TOGETHER

"Volunteers from Shared Routes are more motivated and more understanding of what volunteering is when they arrive here. Other people just say they'll do anything. Shared Routes volunteers are more aware of what skills they have to offer and that made it a lot easier to find them somewhere within the organisation."

ACTIVITIES AND VOLUNTEER COORDINATOR, RAINBOW HAVEN

"We have really seen that even people with limited English can do valuable work."

SHARED ROUTES TEAM MEMBER

"The course, which I did 3 years ago, was fantastic, absolutely fabulous. Each and every session helped me to know the ways to start volunteering, how it's going to benefit me, what are the things we need to know. Doing the course opened up lots of volunteering for me – I've done lots of different things. The course and volunteering since have helped me focus on what is most important to me – the mental health side of things. I have realised how I could focus on what I want to do and how I could push myself into education."

It was hard, and being an asylum seeker double hard. The barriers in the system demotivate you and take you back five steps if you've gone ahead one. With one barrier you've overcome you think you're queen of the world. And then another one comes up. It takes so much effort for us to overcome one barrier. We don't have the money to pay for courses. We don't have any background in this country. It's difficult with all those things not being there. The genuine wish to help us is missing.

When we're children we're given all those options to choose from. I see Shared Routes like that – we had this whole bouquet of stuff to have a taster of, talk to people and see what suits you. And give it time. I've seen many people do that through Shared Routes. I still have friends from the course. It has given us the glimpses of what our lives could be if we want to make a meaningful contribution. I think you need to have that knowledge, use that as your tool. That's what I decided to do.

Everybody who has come into this country to seek sanctuary, we're all fleeing something. So that connection and to understand that I am wanted is so important. You feel 'Gosh I can belong here now; I can set my roots here'. If you don't want me why would I bother to contribute if I'm not included.

Nobody is willing to take on a green person, you have to have something in you for them to trust you and give you responsibility. So learning that through volunteering was very important. So step by step going on to do different volunteering – I did like a dozen different roles. And now I'm focussing on mental health. I have decided my path. I have trained as a mindfulness teacher with Mind, bringing this empowerment to the people of our network and beyond. Now I'm training to be a counsellor and psychotherapist."

NIRBHAYA, FROM INDIA



"I did the Shared Routes course two years ago online during the Covid pandemic. The training gave me a lot of confidence. Then I volunteered with MRSN— making phone calls to people to check how they're doing. It was a difficult time for us. I still talk to those ladies.

Also I used to receive calls from MRSN to check on me. It was lovely – that meant a lot at that time. It also helped me with my mental health as I used to be alone in the house. Receiving the phone calls made me feel like someone is in my home and I'm connected to someone.

Before I started at Shared Routes I was scared to talk on the phone in English as I didn't understand what people say to me. I was fine face to face. In the pandemic everything changed to online or the phone. I had no choice but to speak to people in English. Now I understand what people say to me on the phone. I have improved my English a lot and can speak to anyone. That's a great achievement for me.

One of the women I met then is now my best friend. I used to translate for her in Urdu. We can laugh about it because we now speak in our own language.

Now I volunteer in lots of places."

GOLI, PEER NAVIGATOR



INCREASED PARTICIPATION OF REFUGEES AND ASYLUM SEEKERS IN CITIZENSHIP AND COMMUNITIES

Peer Navigators, staff and external organisations have reported the following key aspects:

- Understanding UK systems and culture
- Contributing to society through volunteering and working
- Increased self confidence
- Opportunity to help others

Other aspects mentioned include:

- Developing kindness, understanding and empathy for others
- Confidence to speak in English
- Feeling valuable to or wanted by the community
- Contributing to system and service development

"I had never experienced volunteering before I came to the UK. Everything was a new world for me, a new language, a new culture, a new environment. So I couldn't engage with people. The course – which I did online during Covid - prepared me to make it easier to be engaged. I had information about the new environment.

Before the course, I was inside. I never went anywhere. I was stuck in my home and had fear of going out. The course taught me that outside is fine and safe. They helped me understand the outside life and culture. Then I could come out.

The training gave me the confidence and the skills to apply for volunteering placements. I first volunteered at Fareshare in the food warehouse. It was enjoyable. I have now done 3 volunteering placements. The first time Shared Routes helped me to be involved with a charity. Now I don't need anyone's help - I can talk by myself, I can introduce myself to others. There's no need for someone else. That's a big change. I am more independent.

It starts with confidence. When you step up you don't stop, it is step behind the step. When you come here, the hardest thing is the first step. Volunteer work gives you a big push to step the first step. When you succeed after the first step, the rest is easy and it all goes quick. It's crazy - when you look back, and you see how you've stepped - you couldn't imagine this in those days before you started.

I am still an asylum seeker. I enjoy it because I spend my time in volunteer work, engaging with people, focussing on yourself and the occasion. My mental health is really better.

You want to stop being an asylum seeker and be like everyone else. When you start volunteering you start to educate yourself, you can say – this is what I wanted. It's not all about the paper [status], it's all about the time you spend it on."

AARON FROM YEMEN

"We open a door for people to integrate into society. For example, we introduced people to local arts and culture organisation HOME which gave them a chance to go to a place where everyone goes and to be part of things. And they received a free voucher for the cinema at HOME."

SHARED ROUTES TEAM MEMBER

"It helps refugees and asylum seekers with settling into the working practices over here - in this community this is how jobs go. You have a supervisor, a manager, the working operations and so on. We work to job descriptions and those are differences they find very different here. They see it as a positive thing - they're building up experience for when they do get their status in order to compete for jobs out there. That changes their CV in a very different way."

**HEAD OF VOLUNTEERING & EMPLOYABILITY PROGRAMMES,
EMERGE 3RS (INCLUDING FARESHARE GREATER
MANCHESTER)**



IMPACT ON VOLUNTARY AND COMMUNITY ORGANISATIONS

On completion of the Shared Routes training course, peer navigators have taken up volunteering roles in a wide range of voluntary and community organisations. The Covid pandemic has reduced the number of volunteering placements that has been possible as many agencies closed or reduced services needing volunteers. Also some peer navigators were not keen to volunteer due to health and safety concerns or caring responsibilities, and some people went into work or education.

OUTCOME: Increase in volunteering in local organisations by Peer Navigators

- 220 people completed the peer navigator training (project target 207)
- 103 peer navigators completed a minimum of 3 months successful volunteering in local organisations across sectors (project target 156)

Peer Navigators, staff and external organisations have reported the following key aspects:

- Build capacity of host organisation to deliver its services
- For smaller organisations, this may be critical to activities happening at all
- For larger organisations, the capacity is enhanced and more activities/services can be offered
- Bring own country's ways of working to influence how services are delivered
- Wider staff and volunteer team learn about refugee and asylum seekers
- Community mixing in the workplace

"Local organisations benefit from being able to gain participation from local residents."

ESOL COORDINATOR, TAMESIDE MBC

REFUGEE AND ASYLUM SEEKER COMMUNITY ORGANISATIONS

OUTCOME: Increased capacity of MRSN and refugee community organisations (RCOs) through the Peer Navigator network (project target 21 volunteers at MRSN and RCOs)

- 16 peer navigators have volunteered at MRSN in a range of projects
- 17 peer navigators have volunteered at 11 refugee community organisations

Tasks that volunteers have undertaken include:

At MRSN: making calls to asylum seekers in home language or English, interpreting, helping with food parcels, visiting asylum seekers in hotels, contributing to policy development, supporting drop-in sessions, supporting Shared Routes training development and delivery, Shared Routes administration

At RCOs: helping people complete official forms, organising and supporting community events, administration, outreach support work, packing food banks parcels, managing social media groups etc.

"We have supported small organisations who have difficulty in recruiting volunteers. And helped organisations to deliver their work and activities."

MANAGER, MRSN

"I was afraid of completing forms for people and making mistakes. I have skills and knowledge but before I didn't have confidence. Now I can do those things, and am more confident to engage with people."

PEER NAVIGATOR



"Shared Routes basically bridges the gap of volunteer training and also connecting people with RCO and other communities. It's clearly saving us time and gives us a direct connection to get volunteers involved in our small little projects quickly."

PRIDES

"Without the volunteers we couldn't do our service for people."

**ERITREAN COMMUNITY ORGANISATION
OF GREATER MANCHESTER**



"Before I did the Shared Routes course two years ago, I was sitting at home a bit depressed. As an asylum seeker I'm not allowed to work. The course gave me a chance to meet new people and to make new friends. They improved me, and gave me confidence about how to act with people."

I was already studying interpreting and have been able to volunteer at MRSN ever since the course, including all through the Covid lockdowns. I am an asylum guide, going to the hotel where people are living, or doing interpretation on the phone. When you see people who are going through a challenging time like you have, you feel that you can help them. You can be up-to-date with the rules. I'm still an asylum seeker so it gives me chance to keep updated.

This has opened doors here for me. My volunteering supervisor has sent me information about applying for studies as an asylum seeker. I can do more and improve my qualifications, and it's shown me how I can bring in my qualifications from home. Also I have gone to refugee events. MRSN have put me forward to be part of a Refugee Action group. We have been talking about the challenges of the process of being an asylum seeker and how to build trust. Our discussions will support the organisation and improve the quality of services.

So it's not just volunteering. You meet new people, you know more, go to events, know about and go on courses. It's changed my life really. So I'm so happy and pleased with that."

SAHAR, FROM PALASTINE

"MRSN has become connected to other organisations we didn't know. Our profile has increased so organisations start to ask us for volunteers, and other people refer to us. We have attracted funding due to this project, which has helped with our track record and solid base. For example we have a new food project. The peer navigators have also enhanced our volunteer base of about 100 volunteers and helped us to reach more people."

MANAGER, MRSN

GENERAL VOLUNTARY AND COMMUNITY ORGANISATIONS

60 peer navigators have volunteered at 34 local organisations:

including Age UK, British Heart Foundation (Salford), British Red Cross, City of Sanctuary, Emerge 3Rs/Greater Manchester Fareshare, Infinity Initiatives, Levenshulme Inspire, Mustard Tree, Rainbow Haven

Tasks that peer navigators have undertaken include:

charity shop assistant, charity shop warehouse activities, food bank warehouse activities, wood recycling activities/carpentry, delivering Covid safety kits, mosque security support, vaccination centre activities, community centre café kitchen worker, air ambulance service support, food parcel provision, food project administration, family support visitor, delivering English classes (qualified teacher), supporting community events, advice work, cleaning support, homeless centre support

"I am from Albania, where I taught children English and was training to be an interpreter. I did the Shared Routes course three years ago. Through it my English improved. It helped me to be integrated into society, to understand a different culture with new people. You don't feel judged and there's space for everyone. You don't have to know everything.

Since then I have helped people, especially interpreting for refugee women – for example single mums who need help with NHS appointments, sometimes face to face and sometimes on the phone.

I have also done volunteering teaching dance and drama to children. It was just 5 mins from my house but I didn't know it existed. It was one step to start and take courage to do something. Sometimes you don't have the courage to start. Shared Routes give you lots of different directions you can go in with volunteering. I think the work experience was very important – it gives you a sense of the reality of the role. You deal with people from different cultures and backgrounds and issues. Knowing the reality is very helpful - it's the first step – to be integrated. It helps different people to do the same.

It's not our culture to speak to strangers. At first I was quite cold with other people. It's helped me to be more friendly with others and help each other. You change without knowing it's happening. It's an experience that changes you. Also I have invited other people to join the course. You give your example to others and they see it works then."

RIDA

"Shared Routes as part of MRSN give us a new network. We're conscious of diversity and inclusion. MRSN are there as a network and we can reach out to them and through them reach people out there we'd like to work with."

VOLUNTEER & EMPLOYABILITY PROGRAMMES MANAGER, EMERGE 3RS

"It enables me to operate, without volunteers we don't have the capacity. So we can drive more money into the research we do - that's ultimately our commitment - to the Heart Foundation."

STORE MANAGER (SALFORD), BRITISH HEART FOUNDATION

"The two volunteers we've had have been good and without them other people would be more stressed and it would be more difficult for others."

ACTIVITIES AND VOLUNTEER COORDINATOR, RAINBOW HAVEN

IMPACT ON COMMUNITIES

STRONGER REFUGEE AND ASYLUM SEEKER COMMUNITIES

Peer Navigators, staff and external organisations have reported the following key aspects:

- Volunteering at MRSN and in RCOS leading to enhanced services to communities
- Community integration for peer navigators especially through volunteering in local organisations
- Setting up own support networks or activities – peer navigators within own community
- Peer navigators passing what they have learnt on to other refugees and asylum seekers and encouraging them to do Shared Routes and other courses
- Peer Navigators taking part in refugee awareness activities for the wider community
- Shared Routes programme promoting community equality and diversity

"I had lived here for a few years before I did the Shared Routes training three years ago. Before the course I was so shy, I had no confidence. It was better for me to not speak. I thought people couldn't understand me.

At the training they made you speak through the group work on the course. So I started to speak in front of people. I met different kinds of people from different countries with different attitudes. I gained my confidence. I started to chat with those people and made some lasting friendships. I can open my mouth now. It's totally different. I'm not a brave person but that programme pushed me. It totally changed my life.

Shared Routes also encouraged me to interpret in my language. Since the course, I have helped a lot of asylum seekers from my country – I act as an interpreter. I meet people around my area. Nearly two years ago, I set up my own informal support group for women and their children who come from where I do. We meet every month with our kids.

I'd had my driving licence for 6 years before I went to Shared Routes but I was so scared. I gained the confidence to study to be a taxi driver and have had my badge for nearly two years. I really enjoy it. Every day I meet a lot of different people and speak to them.

I have encouraged a lot of my friends to go on the course and do voluntary work. A lot of them were sitting at home. So they need to be brave to gain confidence, be socialised. For all of us there's a lot of benefits from joining."

HELEN FROM ERITREA

"We are creating a bank of confident people who can offer something to the community. When I see Helen's journey - she was timid and wouldn't talk. She was shy but had the potential. Over 3 years her development was incremental but her confidence has grown. We really helped with her confidence."

SHARED ROUTES TEAM MEMBER

"We have a family of four - Dad and 3 sons, who are still volunteering after more than two years. They have developed friendships with other regular volunteers. On a Saturday some of the women cook and they bring food in and eat together, so there's that communal food sharing. They've got to know each other and they're comfortable with the supervisors."

HEAD OF VOLUNTEERING & EMPLOYABILITY PROGRAMMES, EMERGE 3RS



"Volunteering here helps people integrate into and feel part of the local community. Salford is quite a multicultural place, despite its reputation. It's hard enough moving house in your own country let alone moving from wherever in the world you're coming from."

STORE MANAGER (SALFORD), BRITISH HEART FOUNDATION

"The programme creates harmonious communities to be proud to be a part of. It also promotes equality and diversity in communities. With financial constraints residents are not always able to travel far to engage in volunteering opportunities, with emphasis being on local opportunities this is a great way to gain participation from residents."

ESOL COORDINATOR, TAMESIDE MBC

"There's a community here of people who may not be from the same place but they can feel something in common in their backgrounds."

ACTIVITIES AND VOLUNTEER COORDINATOR, RAINBOW HAVEN

"I did the Shared Routes course about three years ago. Then I didn't like to speak with others as English is not my first language. People would make fun of me. That was the most important thing - for me to get more confidence. From the course I found that if I just speak they will love me and they will help me."

I learnt a lot about other people on the course. I met other people, for example, two women from China. I helped them to learn English and make a new life in this country. I learnt that it's not too late to start again at any age. I try to help other people especially refugees. If I see them in the street or somewhere where they can't speak English, I will help them. I feel good by helping other people."

Because of the course I started to speak and to go for volunteering. It was very great for me. I have volunteered for Cancer Help and will soon be starting another volunteering role. I have learned to fight for something because I have the right. I can be part of the community now without any problem."

MAHNAZ





FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS

The experience of Shared Routes to date has proven the need for the project and illustrated the impact it has for individuals, local organisations and communities. The team has learnt much about successful ways of working with people to help them achieve these impacts.

The project is very conscious of the ongoing barriers for refugees and asylum seekers which include: the asylum dispersal process often exacerbates isolation; asylum seekers can be moved to a new area with little or short notice; many refugees and asylum seekers have limited English language skills.

The ongoing development priorities for the Shared Routes project are to:

- Widen the geographic reach of the project to flexibly include more areas in Greater Manchester with high numbers of refugees and asylum seekers
- Increase the scope of work to accommodate those wishing to find employment, education or training rather than volunteer
- Maintain hybrid working in a way that maximises impact for peer navigators
- Investigate programmes of support for volunteer development
- Address some of the barriers to volunteer placements including: small organisations who have no volunteer budget; and organisations understanding what can be achieved by volunteers who have limited English language skills
- Strengthen and further develop links with key local agencies who support the project
- Improve initial and ongoing communication with agencies about the project

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

MRSN and the Shared Routes project would like to thank everyone who has helped support our work in achieving positive outcomes for refugees and asylum seekers and our communities.

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We also thank everyone who has contributed to this report.

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