



Greater Manchester

IMMIGRATION AID UNIT

Impact Report 2017



All4One group members after the workshop at Manchester Art Gallery.

Foreword

As the new Chair of the Board of Trustees at the **Greater Manchester Immigration Aid Unit** (GMIAU) I am very pleased to present our first Impact Report. I hope that you will find the report informative, providing you with a clear understanding of the unit's work and, importantly, an insight into the incredible challenges many of our clients, who include unaccompanied children, have overcome to find safety and a new life in the United Kingdom.

As the new chair, and a relatively new Trustee, I have been impressed by the commitment and professionalism of our staff who support people in desperate need. Many of our clients have faced the most harrowing circumstances before they arrive here and often encounter a series of very complex processes, and perhaps some set-backs, as they seek the right to remain. The people we support are truly inspirational. The legal support we provide is incredibly important but so too is the additional support we provide for example our work to reunite families and our advocacy for unaccompanied children and young people.

If you are an existing supporter of our work thank you. If this report is your introduction to the **Greater Manchester Immigration Aid Unit** I hope it will encourage you to contact us to find out more about how we can work together to save lives and help people to secure a safer, brighter future.



Steven Grant MBE,
GMIAU Chair

Immigration Legal Advice and Representation

With a team of 13 legal advisors **GMIAU** is one of the largest not for profit immigration legal advice providers in the UK.

Our ability to provide high-quality legal advice to people in need is absolutely fundamental to who we are as an organisation.

We put the person first and we take on each case committed to represent the individual to the best of our abilities.

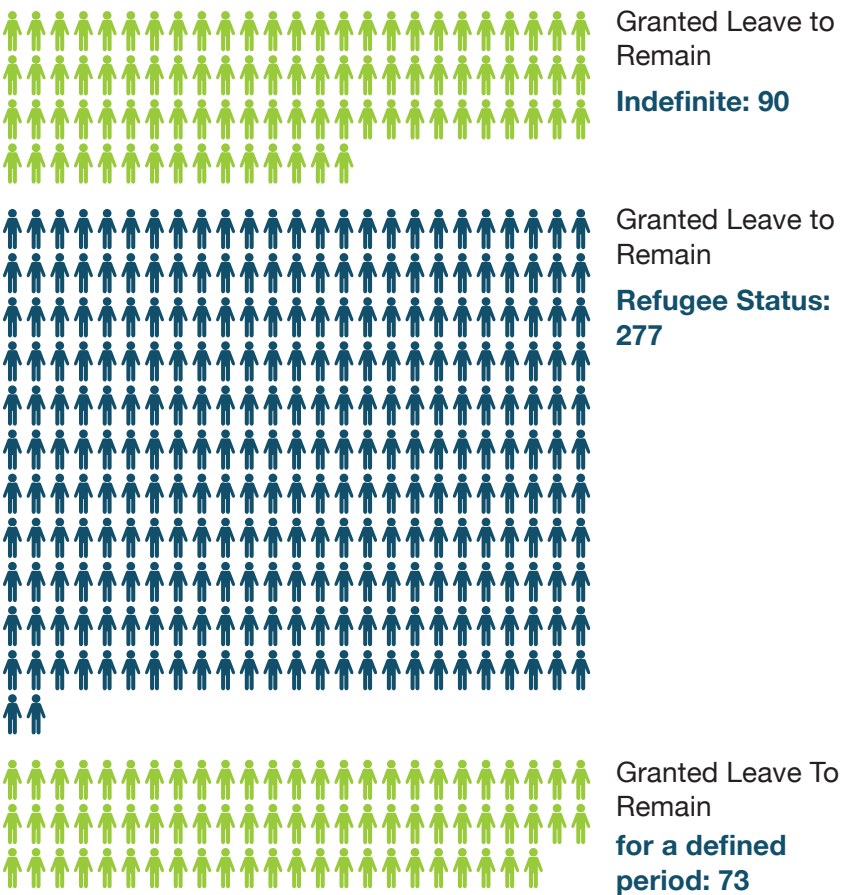
We don't give up.

GMIAU represents clients at all stages of appeals and Judicial Review in the Immigration and Asylum Chamber, Administrative Court and Court of Appeal. We have a national reputation for our work as well as a very high profile in Greater Manchester and the north west of England. We have notable successes in our casework. We take on cases which may be seen as too complex or unpopular and we fight each case to win.

The cuts to legal aid in 2013 have left many people unable to secure legal representation for compelling cases which include human rights including those affecting people held in indefinite immigration detention at the end of their criminal sentence, and families who face deportation or the separation of parents from their children. ■

Between April 2016 and March 2017 we took on **839 new immigration and asylum cases**. In the same period **440 people got Leave to Remain**.

Case Outcome (1 April 2016 to 31 March 2017)



Adam's story

I am married to a British person and we have three children. The Home Office granted me indefinite Leave to Remain in the UK and I was waiting to apply for my passport. I was under a lot of pressure and I did something that I really regret and got in trouble with the police. I was sent to jail. I was silly. I apologised and I've have served my time. Even the judge said I am a man of good character, but in difficult circumstances.

After I left prison, the Home Office decided to deport me. I appealed against this decision and lost the appeal. My wife became so stressed that the Home Office agreed to reconsider their decision because of her health. I also had a child from a previous marriage whose mother became unable to care for him and social services brought him to me. He was troubled

and mixing with the wrong groups. I agreed to look after him, and together we turned his life around. About a year later the Home Office decided they would deport me and I turned to GMIAU to help me appeal. I had no money. GMIAU were so good and didn't make any charge to me. They argued really well at the appeal about the impact I had made on my now thirteen year old son and the potential costs to the public if he had to go into long term foster care. We won the appeal, but my long ordeal still wasn't over. The Home Office got permission to appeal but they lost. Then they tried to appeal to the Court of Appeal but lost. I am finally now just so relieved as I am about to get my Leave to Remain with my family in the UK. It's a new start and I really want to make a contribution to the community I live in. ■

The legal context

What made this case so challenging was that his conviction was serious, despite being his only offence, and we had to show that ...it would be unduly harsh for the child to remain in the UK without the person who is to be deported. As the main carer for his 13 year old British son, we had to get evidence from social services who were initially reluctant to engage with us, about alternative care arrangements. There was no alternative and from the contents of the child's file we could draw a distinction between how troubled his life was before and how things had improved significantly under his father's care. The judge agreed. Without his father the

child would be placed in care incurring significant public costs and not in the interests of the child. This type of case is no longer funded by legal aid even though there are clear humanitarian reasons for Adam to stay in the UK. The case was complex. With the support of a barrister – who agreed to act even though he knew there was no funding – we were able to keep this family together, prevent further distress and the threat of separation, and make sure that children have the support of their father who is clearly one of their most valued relationships. ■

Nadia, solicitor, GMIAU

"From now on I can live happily with my family, I can get a job, have a family and can take care of my health and family's health too. Finally, because GMIAU guide and assist, that I get Refugee Status and can live my life with my family, I hope GMIAU will keep on helping people like me, so they can live their life. Thank you very much GMIAU."

Client granted Refugee Status



Children and Young People

Over the last 12 months we have seen a significant increase in the number of children and young people needing legal immigration advice and representation.

Children and young people between the ages of 6 (our youngest) and 18 who are separated and have no family in the UK are in particularly difficult circumstances. Access to sensitive and experienced immigration advisors is essential in ensuring all relevant evidence and arguments are put forward and the child or young person receives the legal status she or he is entitled to. The closure of the camp in Calais in France in October 2016 and the Dubs amendment to the Immigration Act 2016 have resulted in some of the children in the camps being transferred to the UK and to the North West.

We also work with children who have been trafficked and to assist children with discretionary applications for citizenship, and for discretionary applications for indefinite Leave to Remain. ■

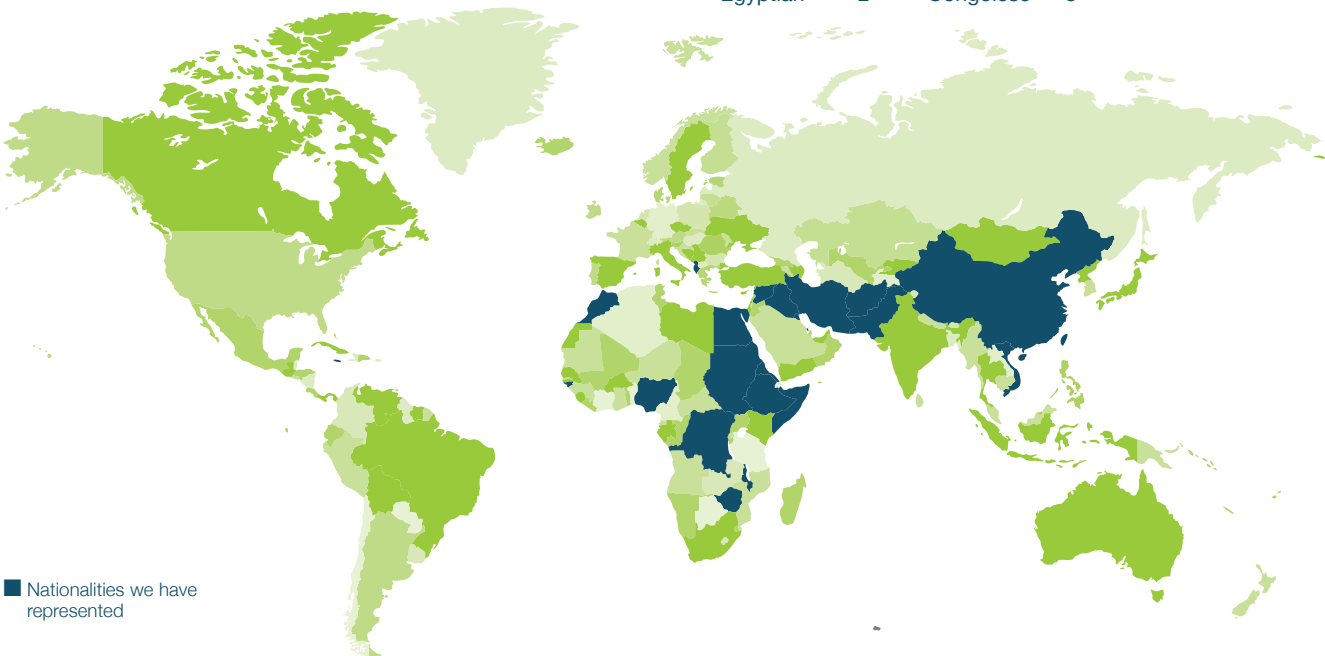
Between April 2016 and March 2017 we took on **156 news cases for children under 18**. In the same period **94 children got Leave to Remain**.

Case Outcome (1 April 2016 to 31 March 2017)



The children whose cases we took on between April 2016 and March 2017 were of **22 different nationalities**.

Bahraini	1	Malawian	2	Syrian	10
Guinean	1	Moroccan	2	Iraqi	12
Jamaican	1	Zimbabwean	2	Iranian	19
Kuwaiti	1	Nigerian	3	Eritrean	20
Somali	1	Pakistani	3	Sudanese	24
Albanian	2	Vietnamese	4	Afghan	30
Chinese	2	Ethiopian	6		
Egyptian	2	Congolese	8		



Fahim's story

I came to England as a child from Afghanistan. My older brother is also here and I lived with him for 3 years. I studied for 2 years as a mechanic and worked in a garage. I wanted to do that work but it was too cold and I stopped. Now I live on my own in a flat in an area I like near to the city, although it has a damp problem which the council haven't solved yet. It makes me ill but I can't leave as I'm worried I won't get somewhere else to live.

I work in a takeaway near the university and enjoy meeting and talking to students from around the world. The hours are uncertain, and I can be called in at short notice.

My main interest is wrestling, I train whenever I can. I also like to play football and I support Manchester United.

I have friends that I met when I went to the All4One group for young people run by GMIAU – we did trips and went to parties together. I went for a long time until I felt I was too old to keep going, and I still see those friends sometimes. I also have friends from wrestling and from the mosque, and I see my brother usually every week.

I want to be successful and push myself all the time. I trust myself. I do my best. I will do what I have the chance to do. I am a Muslim and am supported by my religion and my beliefs which give me hope. I pray every day.

GMIAU gave me a lot of help. When I first applied for my visa I didn't understand what was happening. I was happy when I got my first temporary visa but I was worried about what would happen afterwards. When I

went back after 5 years to apply again, I had the same worker – she didn't recognise me at first as I had changed so much – it was good to have her again.

Now I have indefinite Leave to Remain I feel good and free and have my independence. I feel life now, I enjoy it and learn from life. I am no longer dependent on my brother, I am responsible for everything and I like that.

I can try hard to achieve my ambitions. I would like to wrestle competitively and, when I have my British passport, to travel abroad for competitions.

I like living in Manchester, it's really good. I can work, go to training, rest. As long as I am in England I will definitely live in Manchester. I have promised myself I am not going to move from Manchester because I know it now. ■

The legal context

As an organisation we specialise in representing children subject to immigration control. Children's cases are often more challenging and complex for a number of reasons. For example, a child may not know the reasons why she or her family are at risk in their country of origin or may be reluctant to talk about what has happened to them.

We take time to put a child at ease and build trust before asking questions about difficult or sensitive issues; if a child is particularly vulnerable we may meet with a them several times before taking detailed instructions in order make the experience less intrusive and to secure the best evidence/information in their case.

We also ensure that we are experts on the place the child has come from so we can put the information they provide into context. This means we ask fewer questions of the child and they are more likely to feel understood, and, crucially, it means we are aware of all the risks they may face and we can highlight these risks to the Home Office support of their case. For example, research may show recent fighting in the child's home village and a resulting risk to children of recruitment as child-soldiers, or may show that individuals of the child's particular ethnic group are at risk of persecution in that area.

Other complex issues that arise include disputes as to a young person's age, lack of documentation to

establish nationality and high levels of trauma arising from separation from family and the extreme hardship and danger encountered on the journey to the UK. Many of our young clients have also been victims of trafficking and we refer to and work with other agencies to manage ongoing safeguarding concerns.

As lawyers, our focus is on securing lawful status in the UK for our young clients but we also have the benefit of working closely with the children's support worker and social work students at GMIAU to help vulnerable and often isolated young people to resolve problems in other areas of their lives. ■

Kate, solicitor, GMIAU

Asylum, Protection and Human Rights

A significant amount of the work we do includes representing people who are claiming protection (asylum) in the UK.

People who have fled war, conflict and persecution in countries such as Syria or Iraq face a hostile and difficult asylum process which, without legal representation, leaves people unable to put forward their case in a way that has any chance of achieving justice or a fair hearing.

The grounds for claiming protection stem from the 1951 Refugee Convention which states that a refugee is defined ‘as a person who is outside of his or her country, and unable to be protected by that country ‘owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion’. This definition applies to people fleeing conflict and persecution across the world. Examples include the situation of the Yazidi community in Iraq, or LGBT men and women who fear persecution in countries which kill or imprison people on the grounds of sexuality.

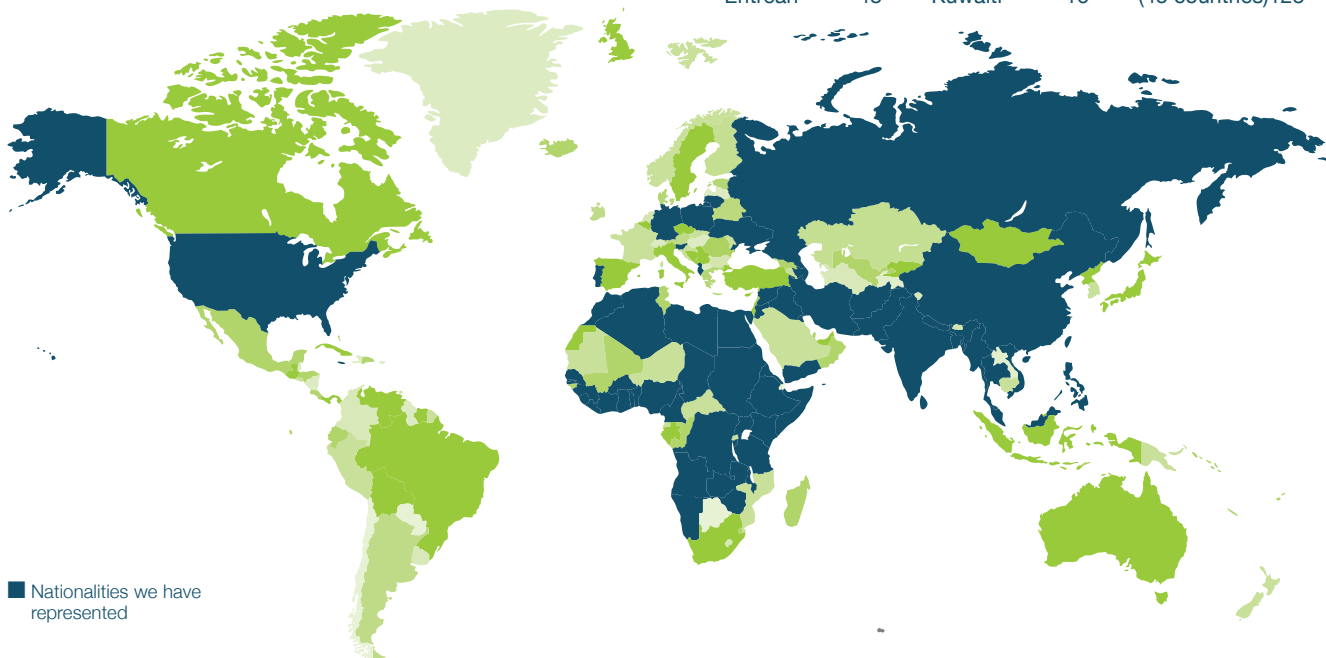
Persecution

Yazidis belong to an ethnic and religious minority group. Estimates put the global number around 700,000 with a vast majority of Yazidis concentrated in Northern Iraq. Being one of Iraq’s oldest minorities, people belonging to this group have faced oppression and threatened extermination.

The situation in Iraq has been fluid for very many years and as a result of this minority groups have become targets. ■

In the year we represented **people of 64 different nationalities.**

Iranian	234	Iraqi	46	Jamaican	15
Afghan	87	Congolese	37	Moroccan	13
Nigerian	84	Syrian	34	Ghanaian	12
Pakistani	61	Cameroonian	19	Albanian	11
Libyan	55	Somali	18	Gambian	10
Sudanese	53	Ethiopian	16	Other	
Eritrean	48	Kuwaiti	16	(45 countries)	123



■ Nationalities we have represented

Zack’s story

I first came to the UK from Iraq in 2010 to do a doctorate in engineering and planned to return home once it was finished. I was funded by my family. It is important to me to be educated and to work hard. Due to events in my country that got worse whilst I was here studying, I couldn’t return home. You can’t imagine what kind of suffering and atrocities happened to my community. ISIS have been (and still are) brutal and many people, including a lot of my family, were killed. I now have one brother and one sister left who live in different places in Europe.

GMIAU gave me very good help, and I got Leave to Remain after about 6 months. It was very important for me to get legal status. I have never done anything illegal in my life. When I was granted asylum my life totally changed. Now Iraq has gone in my life, I can’t go back, so it was a starting point. This is my country now and I want

to do something in return for the protection they give me and the permission to stay here.

I hadn’t seen my sister for 10 years. Now I am able to visit her every few months. Free travel is enough for me because I can see my family and I feel I am a human being. When I go to or pass the airport, I kiss my passport.

I am very motivated. I worked hard to understand what employers want and applied for many jobs. When you are from a developing country, it’s not easy to be on the same standing as people from developed countries. I am determined to support myself and have made no benefits claims except for having Job Seekers Allowance for four months.

I have just got a job in engineering at the university, so I can use my qualifications, my knowledge and my experience – I feel I have been treated equally and fairly on the basis of these. With time I want to take my career much further.

I live here like British people do and get the same respect wherever I go without prejudice. I am just like any citizen.

I have met people in different places – socially, in bars and through football. I have British friends and neighbours – we have barbecues and go to bars together and they help me understand the systems here.

We lived in a terrible place in Iraq where we were treated as animals. When you come to a different environment like here, then you respect and value everything. People from here don’t value what they have – their language, passport and nationality. Everyone is rich like a king, but they don’t understand that because they don’t know what it means. There are no difficulties like in Iraq, even if you sleep in the street. I have taught young people here and tried to get this message across. Everything is here for you. It’s a good life. ■

The legal context

Zack is from a Yazidi family in Iraq and as such he is from a minority religious persuasion and Yazidis have been targets during the fighting. Families have tried to flee but many have become victims and many have disappeared. Given the levels of human rights violations and the general security situation in areas controlled by the Islamic State (ISIL) or the contested areas, people such as Zack should be afforded protection by the international community as he cannot return to a safe area within Iraq. The international community must consider in similar cases to Zack what to expect on his return, his vulnerability and the risk of harm.

Consideration must also be given to whether it is viable for people to return and whether they can reasonably relocate. In Zacks case the evidence indicated that as a Yazidi he would be at increased risk – he therefore met the criteria for belonging to a religious or ethnic minority group. He wasn’t able to relocate to other parts of Iraq or be offered protection. To be accepted as a refugee, and granted asylum, he needed to initially satisfy the Home Office that he fitted into each part of the definition in Article 1A2 of the Convention. He did and he was granted ‘Refugee Status’. ■

Shakhura, senior caseworker, GMIAU



Modern Slavery

The trafficking of people, including children, into the UK for exploitation is increasingly recognised and has been given a high public profile with the introduction Modern Slavery Act in 2015.

We represent men, women, and children who have been trafficked and are living in the North West.

The technical definition of a victim of trafficking is lengthy and there are a number of different aspects to consider. However, an example of a victim of trafficking is someone who is brought into the UK on the promise of a 'better life', but they are then forced into prostitution or exploited in other ways. Many people are victims of trafficking, but it is often not until they access legal advice that they understand what their rights are and what assistance they are entitled to. It is difficult to get the Home Office to recognise that someone is the

victim of trafficking and there are times when people do not even know themselves that they are victims of a crime. That is why legal advice is very important in this area.

In the last 12 months we have represented over 70 adults and children who are the victims of trafficking. Typically people have been forced into sexual exploitation, drug production, domestic servitude, forced labour, criminal activity, and exploitation by gangs for criminal activity. ■

Leona, caseworker, GMIAU

"The outcome completely changed my life. I can be a normal working person now, my rights have been secured. Thanks to the team."

Client granted Right of Residence including Right to Work

Olivia's story

I didn't used to want to talk about this, but now I know it helps me to be free if I talk about it. I was trafficked to the UK and had to do a lot of things I didn't want to. My life was very hard. When I first applied for asylum I was in Liverpool and then I was moved to Manchester.

I have two children who are both at school. I have a part-time job as a support worker, which I really enjoy. We live in a council house, which I didn't expect to get – it is a good home. My neighbours are very friendly and they help me with practical problems. I also have friends that I met whilst I was in asylum housing.

When you are waiting for your asylum decision, there is so much stress and worry. I first had a solicitor in Liverpool. When I was turned down, he immediately closed my case. A friend told me about GMIAU, so I travelled over to be here for 5-30am to wait for the drop-in. My GMIAU solicitor

understood my situation and felt she could do something. She gave me hope. She didn't give up, and used a barrister at court which gave extra power. She also helped with my children's applications and got me support from a project for people who have been trafficked.

It was very hard to wait, I needed to know. I had had two previous refusals. When the letter came, I didn't even have to sign for it. When I opened it I was shaking. I jumped over the moon with the decision!

With what I have gone through, I have realised it's not the end of the world, you can start again. If someone says no, you can't do anything. Before I got leave I couldn't work because you need a visa. Now I can go and ask for work. That's the biggest achievement for me and the most important.

I can also make plans for the future, I want to study more and do more work. My children are happy and our future feels more secure.

I want to encourage people to talk about their difficult experience and let it out, it doesn't help to keep it to yourself. I used to feel ashamed and that I was the only one with such a hard past. I went to a NHS well-being service and I met others there. I realised trafficking has happened to thousands of people. It freed my mind and my story became a normal one to me. We all became so free from the experience of sharing.

And it's important to take up the chance to volunteer and go to college whilst you are seeking asylum. It is such a stressful time and you need to take your mind off it. I did a work placement in a shop and I volunteered at the local children's centre – both of these places then gave me references which helped me to get my job.

When life is so hard, whatever you can do to maintain a positive attitude will help you. ■

The legal context'

It is difficult to get the Home Office to engage in situations such as these where there are often appalling delays and decision-making. We win by not giving up and by persisting with the legal challenges we make until we achieve the best that we can for the person. ■

David, senior solicitor, GMIAU

Impact of Immigration Legal Advice and Representation

In order to understand the longer term impact that GMIAU has on the people we have advised and represented we talked to five former clients – one has received temporary Leave to Remain and four have indefinite Leave to Remain – to find out how their lives are now. It was 9 to 12 months since they had received their leave decisions.

Three of their anonymised accounts are included in this report. The impact in the longer term that the work of GMIAU has contributed to, in particular by obtaining people Leave to Remain, is described here:

Being supported and settled into the community

People have moved into accommodation and areas that they see as being long term, safe places to live and have put down roots accordingly.

Achieving freedom and independence

This was a big factor for all people. The ability to work is highly important for all five people, and the ability to move freely was described by three people. One person has not yet obtained their passport and feels some restriction without it. All people were also able to look ahead and make plans for the future, including the person who has temporary Leave to Remain.

Developing networks

People have developed networks in different ways. For four people their networks include friends who were also seeking asylum (one of these was through a GMIAU social group), four described having good, social and supportive relationships with neighbours, and two people mentioned religious networks. For people with children, networks also develop through their children's social relationships.

Improving positive outlook and mental health

The stress of claiming asylum and going through the often lengthy and complex process was described by all, and was particularly severe for those whose cases took longer. Having Leave to Remain brings about an instant reduction in this stress, vastly reduces the uncertainty of their futures and creates positive feelings such as happiness and optimism.

Access to healthcare and education

All those interviewed are able to access mainstream support as needed. For the three people with children, they were happy with their GP services and the education their children are receiving. One family has a child with additional educational needs, which have been diagnosed and are being supported. Four people had accessed education courses.

Supportive family units and relationships

Four people also have family in the UK. One person has been able to live again with the family having been separated by differing legal Home Office responses to their asylum claims. One person has been able to reunite with family living in Europe and regularly visits them. Only two people mentioned ongoing contact with people living in their country of origin. The family units and relationships are all working strongly and of high importance.

Additional Support to People in Need

As the asylum system gets harsher and immigration restrictions prevent people from accessing mainstream support, GMIAU is committed to making sure that the rights and entitlements of those who have the most difficulties are supported.

We can't provide immigration advice in isolation when we know that someone hasn't any money or food to live on, or who is in a dangerous situation and needs to get out. It is for this reason that we have set up and run a number of services in addition, and linked, to immigration legal advice.

It's also a reason why we speak out against the injustice that we see.



Abbas and his family reunited at the Manchester Airport.

Asylum Support Housing Advice (ASHA)

ASHA supports people who are in the asylum process and are having problems with their housing, subsistence allowance, or access to healthcare, and people who have been made homeless, or are threatened with homelessness and destitution when their claim for asylum has been refused. ASHA supports over 600 people per year and makes a huge contribution towards preventing more people from becoming destitute and street homeless in Greater Manchester. Of the applications for asylum support that ASHA made 177 were approved (217 people including dependents) which resulted in the immediate alleviation of homelessness. Appealing against refusals by the Home Office to accommodate people is essential and 126 appeals were submitted in the last 12 months.

Refugee Family Reunion

People who are recognised as refugees (Refugee Status) have the right to apply to bring married or civil partners, same-sex partners and children aged 17 or under to reunite here in the UK if they were part of the family unit before the person with refugee status had to flee. The application includes submitting evidence in support of the application, including original documents such as birth or marriage certificates for example. Legal aid funding for this type of application was removed in 2013. Since that time refugees have had to try and find enough money to pay for the service through a solicitor. For many this is impossible.

GMIAU set up the project in 2013 and since that time we have successfully made on average 100 refugee family reunion applications per year. In the last year we supported 104 refugees to bring 183 close family members to the UK

"I want to express my sincere thanks to you for all your help and support with my case. I don't know what I would have done without GMIAU. All of your efforts made it possible for me to get back on my feet and get on with my life. It is a blessing that people in such a difficult situation have people like you to turn to. I'll never forget how much you helped me. Big thank you sooo...much..."

Client granted Refugee Status

Each case is assessed by a caseworker and volunteers help gather the necessary evidence to help make the application successful. One application can take anywhere from 3 weeks to 3 months to prepare depending on the complexity. Ten volunteers currently work on the project and many have a refugee background. We have achieved national recognition for our work in this area.

Children and Young People

Separated children and young people are isolated and often bewildered by the world in which they find themselves. Having survived extreme situations and journeys they are faced with a complex legal system, without any family support, and in an environment which is strange and new. Most speak very little English if any when they arrive in the UK. It is for this reason that we provide extra support to young people to help them understand the situation they are in and to help advocate with professionals and agencies to put in place systems of support. During the year we provided this additional one to one support to 35 young people.

We run a monthly group for young people called 'All4One' and have regular activities that bring young people together to counter isolation and stress, and to make new friends. During the year activities have ranged from sports, trips to museums, the theatre, cinema, the beach,

well-known local football stadiums, free entertainment in the city centre, and a Christmas lunch.

On average 25-35 young people attend the sessions.

Women at Risk

Women who are subject to immigration control can be exploited and abused and can have very few opportunities to escape. Even when they do there is very little provision available because, with no entitlement to public funds, it is impossible to pay the rent that's needed to secure a place in a hostel or refuge. We set this project up in 2016 to provide legal immigration advice and support to women, who are often undocumented, to escape violent, abusive or exploitative situations. In the last year we have advised 324 women and we have secured safe housing for 27 women, either through getting a place in a refuge, making a referral to social services, securing s.95 support from the Home Office, or getting friends and churches to provide safe temporary accommodation. We have set up 'safe spaces' within organisations so that women can get advice without it being known that they are doing so.

In the last 4 months we have secured Leave to Remain for 2 women, 10 women have claimed asylum as a result of our intervention and advice, and 7 women have successfully made Destitute and Domestic Violence

(DDV) concession applications which has secured a place of safety.

Part of the project is to inform and train voluntary and statutory services about the rights and entitlements of women in these situations, and to highlight the issue more widely. If we continue to ignore this situation or accept that it is an inevitable consequence of immigration control more women, and men, will face extreme violence and exploitation.

Support to people newly arrived in the UK and those with granted leave as refugee

People who are newly arrived, particularly those arriving with young children or those who have serious mental illnesses, can face extra difficulties. Similarly, people who are recognised as refugees often face homelessness when their asylum support comes to an end. We have a project where a social worker, volunteers, and students assist people in difficulty. In the last 12 months the students and volunteers supported 106 people (most of whom had dependent family members) with issues such as homelessness, finance and health and welfare issues. Many needed support to access support from social services or have the "no recourse to public funds" status lifted from their immigration status.

Working with others

We can't work in isolation and we value the relationships we have with agencies who are committed to making sure that people have access to legal advice as and when they need it to resolve the difficulties that they face.

We are very pleased to be part of the Manchester Volunteer Advice Partnership – with Manchester MIND, Cheetham Hill Advice Centre, Centrepoin, Manchester Refugee Support Network – to recruit and train volunteers to provide advice to people in need.

In June 2016, GMIAU set up a project with global law firm Freshfields Bruckhaus Deringer who send a legal services advisor to the ASHA office for half a day per week. This is a significant new relationship and one which has provided benefits both to Freshfields and to GMIAU. This project has increased the capacity at ASHA and a total of 65 clients have been supported. The work includes applying for support, completing appeals against refusals / discontinuations of support, research into asylum support delays or poor practice and submitting complaints.

Volunteers

The volunteers who give of their time and commitment are a vital part of the organisation. Whether it's supporting a family who have no recourse to public funds or working with someone who has Refugee Status and

desperately wants to be reunited with the family they left behind, volunteers assist in countless ways to make life more bearable for many of the people we represent.

Volunteer experience

I was a vicar and had refugees and asylum seekers from different countries within my local community. We gave what help and support we could. When I retired, I wanted to continue to help in some way.

I have been coming to GMIAU for the past two years for two days a week. When people get Refugee Status and they have a spouse or children under 18 or both living elsewhere, I try to help them to join the person who has Refugee Status in the UK. To do this, I have to find evidence that the people are genuinely family members. This can be tricky as not all countries have the records that the Home Office requires. I have to sometimes get official documents, like birth certificates, and sometimes DNA testing. It's

very detailed work and can take a long time.

I once supported an African woman who was looking for her husband and we couldn't find him in their home country. The wife met someone whilst in her local supermarket who told her that many people had moved to another country. We sent a picture to someone's relative in that country which they circulated via social media and we found the husband through his barber. It was incredible!

I meet the refugee who's already here and get to know them but I rarely meet the families once they're reunited. The project is not for our satisfaction so we don't see the impact. It feels great to have helped people to reunite. ■

Andrew, volunteer, GMIAU

"Actually, the result and outcome of my case brought lots of differences in my personal life, like now I can access to every opportunity that other citizen has and now I feel that I am safe here."

Client granted Leave to Remain



GMIAU solicitor Kate during her work in Calais.

Developing legal expertise

In recognition of the vital role that we play as part of the wider advice sector, GMIAU was delighted to be offered the opportunity of one of the first Justice First Fellowship awards in 2015. In 2017 we are delighted that this has resulted in not just one but two newly qualified solicitors for GMIAU. Melissa Darnbrough and Nadia Hussein are committed to challenging the injustices that they see every day and have a particular interest in representing people affected by domestic violence, and those under threat of deportation.

Social work students and our relationship with North West Universities

We have a valuable contribution to make towards skilling up the next generation of social workers with more understanding and compassion about the needs of people subject to immigration control. Equally, enthusiastic and committed students have much to offer to the people we see each day. In the last 12 months we have had 5 students on placement.

The future of Legal Immigration Advice

The Justice First Fellowship is a scheme that was introduced in order to support the next generation of law students who are committed to public interest and social justice. Greater Manchester Immigration Aid Unit was one of the first host organisations chosen to participate in the scheme due to their dedication and commitment to providing access to justice.

Opportunities to pursue a career in social welfare law are limited, and even more so within legal aid organisations and so being one of the first fellows in this scheme was an amazing opportunity. The experience, knowledge and skills I have gained working within GMIAU have been invaluable and it has provided opportunities which are above and beyond those of the average training contract.

Now I have qualified as a solicitor, I am able to assist those who have claimed

asylum including un-accompanied children, victims of trafficking and domestic violence, and those who have been affected by breaches to their human rights.

These areas of law typically attract particularly vulnerable people who not only in the majority of cases do not understand the legal system, but who have also been disadvantaged by it. The importance of our role in assisting people is therefore crucial. I am now able to dedicate my knowledge and passion to benefit the wellbeing of those who would not otherwise have the legal voice to do so themselves.

I feel very fortunate to have qualified as a solicitor at GMIAU and to be able to work alongside such an amazing team of devoted and skilled individuals who share the same passion in furthering access to justice. ■

Melissa, solicitor, GMIAU

Our wider impact

The current political climate and government policies have led in recent years to cuts in funding for legal advice for people subject to immigration control as well as retrograde steps in the processes to apply for asylum. Many people are being penalised by the stringent rules on legal aid and a reduction in the provision of free, independent, high-quality advice and representation in the area.

The asylum system is frequently a terrible experience for many people, and exacerbates the often traumatic difficulties they have already faced in coming to the UK. **GMIAU** works actively to tackle the system, to positively change immigration policy, systems and practice and to bring about better treatment of people subject to immigration control including people who are claiming asylum and refugees.

GMIAU influences the wider immigration field including government, local authorities, legal practices and voluntary sector organisations. Some examples of this during the year include:

*"It saved my life.
I can start new life
safely and happily.
And can build good
future. Thank you
GMIAU"*

**Client granted
Refugee Status**

- Briefing paper on the experiences of children from the Calais camp in the North West of England which has been widely disseminated nationally
- Briefing paper on Refugee Family Reunion
- Training course for 25 social workers on 'Working with children in Greater Manchester who are claiming asylum' and training to Supported Lodgings providers about young people leaving care.
- Being part of a national voluntary sector group who are making representations about Refugee Family Reunion to the Home Office and to the All Party Parliamentary Group on Legal Aid
- Joint research with Refugee Action about the length of delays for people seeking asylum which has led to improved responses from Home Office teams
- Speaking at numerous events and to agencies including Equality and Human Rights Commission, Homestart, Salford University, Child Concern.
- Membership of the steering group of the Advice Sector Leadership Development Programme, to develop advice services leaders of the future.
- Work with Refugee Action to develop the Frontline Immigration Advice Project to build capacity to provide immigration advice.

Development Priorities 2017-2019

Our priorities are

“When I came to this country I didn’t have any supporting people to guide me. But after when I met you people give me lots of kind words which makes me again to live in a peaceful. The impact of this result make me and my family happy. Special thanks to the staff and solicitors who make their outmost efforts for me to get a beautiful future in this country.”

**Client granted
Refugee Status**

- To work with others to increase capacity to provide free, independent, legal immigration advice and representation to meet the needs of people in the north west.
- To invest time and effort into training and developing immigration caseworkers for the future.
- To focus on support to people held in indefinite immigration detention in NW prisons and who are facing deportation.
- To scale up the Refugee Family Reunion programme to a national level.
- To be a source of information and support to agencies supporting people subject to immigration control including children and families teams within local authorities.
- To challenge decisions that wrongly deny access to services for people in need on the basis of immigration status.
- To increase and develop our work in policy and influencing to improve the situation for immigrants/people seeking asylum, by increasing our networks to strengthen the work and improving our ability to draw upon our day to day casework to inform policy.
- To campaign against attempts to damage the Human Rights Act and the Refugee Convention.
- To increase the involvement of volunteers, including people who have been through the immigration and asylum process.
- To contribute towards increasing connections between people, decreasing isolation, and making the North West a region that welcomes and supports refugees and all people whose lives are restricted by immigration control.
- To make sure that GMIAU is an effective, well managed and sustainable organisation, true to our values, and that we communicate our impact and the difference we make more widely.
- To maximise our ability to report on the wider outcomes of our work and to produce more analytical reports.
- To secure enough free reserves to withstand threats to statutory funding.
- To find a new building that will allow us to grow and will be more accessible.



Father and daughter reunited after years of separation.

Acknowledgements

GMIAU would like to thank everyone who has helped support our work in achieving positive outcomes for people and their families including our funders:

The Access to Justice Foundation

Comic Relief

Estee Lauder MAC Aids Fund

The Henry Smith Charity

Lloyd's Bank Foundation

The Legal Education Foundation

Local Sustainability Fund

The Network for Social Change

The North West Legal Support Trust

Paul Hamlyn Foundation

Sam and Bella Sebba Charitable Trust

Strategic Legal Fund

The Oglesby Charitable Trust

Thank you to all those who have given their time, their money, and of their experiences to help others and to make GMIAU the organisation that it is today. We can't do it without you.

Thank you so much.

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 [ImmigrationAidUnit](https://www.facebook.com/ImmigrationAidUnit)

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