

## Future Plans

The Board has worked particularly hard this year to develop GMIAU's strategic and business plans. In order to resource this work the trustees expect to focus on securing existing grants and contracts; to maintain the stability and consistency of the service within an environment of public spending uncertainty and cuts; to look for opportunities to increase donations and regular giving; to develop aspects of our work for which new funding may be sought; to develop our relationship with others and to invest time and resources in volunteering and the leaders group; and to continue to campaign against injustice and for the rights of people subject to immigration control.

## Funding and sources

Thank those who have supported us through the year including

- AB Charitable Trust
- Big Lottery Fund – Awards for All
- Comic Relief
- John Grant Davies
- LankellyChase Foundation
- Legal Education Foundation
- Lloyds Bank Foundation
- MAC Aids Fund
- Manchester City Council
- North West Legal Support Trust
- Tameside MBC
- And from individual donations and standing orders.

## Members and supporters

We would like to thank all our members, volunteers and supporters for your continued support of Greater Manchester Immigration Aid Unit. You keep us going with your encouragement and validation of the work that we do. We thank you for your energy and commitment to all that GMIAU stands for.



## Case studies

**Samina** is a bright 17 year old who has a different immigration status from her family because of wrong legal advice. Her mother and two siblings are British. Her status causes her daily distress as her parents cannot afford university fees as she is not classified as a home student. The family cannot afford legal advice, but GMIAU assisted her to make an application for British citizenship. This was wrongly refused. The legal arguments are long and complex but GMIAU has persuaded the Home Office to reconsider. With a positive outcome Samina will be able to go to University and also achieve peace of mind.

**Abdulrahim** claimed asylum based on the risks he faces in Libya. It was refused at all stages in the legal process. We helped him to submit a fresh claim for asylum based on the conflict in Libya. It was accepted and he has been granted 5 years leave to remain as a refugee.

"I have peace of mind. We can plan for our future not worrying about what will happen next."

## GMIAU

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GREATER MANCHESTER  
IMMIGRATION AID UNIT

# Greater Manchester Immigration Aid Unit

## Annual Report 2014-15

"It makes me somebody in the UK."

## Chair of GMIAU – Andy Braunston

It is a pleasure to introduce this year's annual report and to celebrate another year's work which makes such a difference to so many lives. Every year we reflect on the context in which we work; this year is no different with many countries in Europe operating a fortress mentality in the face of people escaping war, persecution and poverty. The narrative in the UK has become even harsher. We have to do whatever is necessary to stand together to remind everyone that claiming protection from persecution is a fundamental human right enshrined in European law. The work that we do at GMIAU is one small part of the contribution to make this a country and a region that welcomes refugees and stands alongside those who face injustice by ensuring that there should be access to the law for everyone and not just the privileged few. ■



## Director of GMIAU – Denise McDowell

Describing GMIAU and the work that we ‘do’ is not always straightforward. Do we start with the people we support (always!) and how do we describe the range of people and situations that we’ve worked with? Do we support refugees and people seeking asylum? Yes we do, over 1000 people a year. But we also advise and represent people who have human rights claims to remain in the UK – people who have a life here and fear being separated from family and loved ones, or returning to a country they don’t know or have never been to. What about people who are held in prison under indefinite immigration detention? Yes, despite cuts to legal aid, we do our best to help people who are under threat of deportation too. What about families with no recourse to public funds, trafficked children, people who are destitute and have no means of support. We are here to help and advise in all of these situations so is this who we are?

What if we describe ourselves as ‘providing high-quality specialist legal immigration advice and representation’? Yes, that’s what we do and we’re one of the last remaining not-for-profit immigration advice providers in the North West to do so. What many don’t realise is what this achieves for people. It means entitlement to work, to independence, to a route out of poverty. It also means that people can settle into their local community, feel safe and secure, and start to rebuild their lives in the UK.

And what about describing what we do as challenging inequality and racism, about campaigning for improvements in the asylum process to ensure that people are treated with respect for basic human rights. Is this who we are? Yes it is.

We are all these things and more and I am very proud of all that we have achieved at GMIAU over the last year. We have survived and grown in strength despite all the major challenges that we face. We could not do this without the committed staff, volunteers, clients, friends and colleagues who make it all possible. It gives me great pleasure to tell you about all that we have achieved in the year and to thank you for your continued support. ■

# Achievements in 2014-15

● **Taken on over 1120 new cases – representing 2750 men, women, and children** – in the Asylum and Immigration Chamber, Court of Appeal, and Administrative Court. Many of the people we see are vulnerable due to circumstance and include people with health problems, people who are destitute, people who have been subject to torture and other forms of ill-treatment, and children and young people who are in the UK on their own.

● **Secured leave to remain for 260 adults, children or families**, including 171 with refugee status, 65 with indefinite leave to remain, and 24 with discretionary leave.

● **Provided a high-quality immigration advice service to Manchester residents**. This includes one-off advice as well as complex.

● **We have strengthened the role of the social work team at GMIAU**, through securing additional funding and with final year social work students, to support families who are in urgent need. These are often families ‘with no recourse to public funds’ who have no independent means of support and who face homelessness, destitution, and/or deteriorating mental health. We have continued to work with the No Recourse team to receive referrals from families supported by the Council. At the time of writing we are supporting 84 families in this situation.

● **Provided an immigration advice service to Tameside residents** until funding ceased in April 2015.

● **Provided immigration drop-in advice sessions** at GMIAU and in other community settings including George House Trust, (people with HIV), WAST (Women Asylum Seekers Together), and by appointment in hospitals and in prisons throughout the North West where people are held under immigration detention.

● **Successfully completed a project, funded by Comic Relief, to develop enhanced casework and support for women who are seeking asylum** and have been subject to gender-based violence. The independent evaluation report for this project is available on our website and provides evidence that women who have initially been disbelieved and refused in their initial asylum claims can, with quality legal advice and commitment, succeed in their fresh claims for asylum. To date 16 women have been granted refugee status or humanitarian protection.

● **Received a ‘Strengthening the Voluntary Sector – Future Advice Providers Funds Grant’** to help us to investigate, develop and implement strategic plans that will put GMIAU on a firmer footing for the future. The grant has allowed us the opportunity to restructure the staff team, and maximise our potential to secure funding for new areas of our development. We are very grateful to the Baring Foundation for the opportunity this grant has provided to help meet the challenges of the next few years.

● **Successfully completed a project, funded by LankellyChase Foundation, to provide advice and support to people who are destitute**. This grant has funded work to put together and submit fresh claims for asylum for people who were at the end of the appeals process. New evidence and significant legal representations have resulted in decisions by the Home Office and the Courts to grant leave to remain, and reduce the number of people who are destitute.

● **Continued to support people who are destitute through a grant from John Grant Davies Trust**.

● **Received core funding from AB Charitable Trust to support the work of GMIAU to focus on cases that are particularly compelling but no longer funded by legal aid**. This has included refugee family reunion and cases involving Article 8 Right to Private and Family life, and deportation.

● **Continued a project funded by MAC Aids Fund to support the human rights applications of people with HIV**.

● **Set up a ‘leadership group’ of former clients who want to be involved in the development of the organisation**. This was funded by an Awards for All grant from the Big Lottery Fund. Members of the group are keen to set up a network of former clients to raise funds and awareness of the need for immigration advice.

● **Continued to work with Barnardo’s and The Children’s Society to run the All 4 One group for young people** who are in the UK on their own, and support those who are at risk in the UK.

● **Received funding from North West Legal Support Trust to help cover the costs of advice to people from outside Manchester through our Tuesday drop-in**.

● **Improved our IT and finance systems** to keep us efficient and effective.

● **Been actively involved in campaigns against the cuts to legal aid**, including submitting evidence to the Justice Select Committee, and anti-deportation campaigns.

● **Set up a new project, Manchester Volunteer Advice Partnership, with Manchester MIND, Manchester Refugee Support Network, Cheetham Hill Advice Centre, and Young Peoples Support Foundation, funded by the Big Lottery, to provide advice to Manchester residents**. This has already resulted in new services that have helped plug some of the gaps in immigration advice provision in the City, and includes a programme to help volunteers gain the necessary skills and experience to achieve advice qualifications in the future. We have recruited and trained 47 volunteers in the second year. They have been recruited from the local neighbourhood and from immigrant local communities. They reflect the languages and cultures of many of the people who need immigration advice. They have been mainly working on the non-legal side of refugee family reunion applications, helping refugees to gather evidence and documents to support their applications.

● **Provided three successful social work student placements** to Salford University and three to Manchester Metropolitan University.

● **Set up a new project, funded by the Lloyds Foundation, to support people at two points of transition – arriving in the UK, and getting refugee status**.

● **We were delighted to be offered the opportunity by the Legal Education Foundation to take on two of the first ‘Justice First Fellowship’ trainee solicitors**. The scheme has been set up to encourage new solicitors into legal aid in areas of civil law. Melissa and Nadia will be developing a project to support people who are foreign national prisoners held in local prisons and who have been trafficked or have potential claims for asylum.

● **We continue to work with a wide range of agencies**, to provide advice and to develop policy responses to immigration and asylum issues.

● **We have been active members of networks of advice agencies, legal aid providers, and others** to campaign against the cuts to legal aid and to try to find ways to support people to make their own applications.

“Now I feel safe I can begin the process of reuniting with my wife and child. Now I can contribute to British society.”