

IMPACT REPORT 2026



Greater Manchester
IMMIGRATION AID UNIT

"Thank you for fighting for the voiceless" – client

Greater Manchester Immigration Aid Unit (GMIAU) has been standing up for people navigating the UK's hostile immigration system for over 35 years. Based in Manchester and Liverpool, we provide expert immigration legal advice, representation and support to people seeking asylum, refugees, children, and vulnerable adults across the North West.

Alongside our legal casework carried out by our dedicated team of **12** solicitors and **15** Immigration Advice Authority accredited caseworkers, we research, campaign, and work with communities to challenge systemic injustice and drive change. People with lived experience of immigration injustice are at the heart of everything we do.

OUR VALUES

WE SPEAK UP

We know what's right and what's fair. We are not silent when we see injustice.

WE FIGHT FOR JUSTICE

We use all the knowledge, expertise, and skill we possess to succeed.

WE SEE THE WHOLE PERSON

We recognise the talents, humanity and potential of those who turn to us for help.

WE ACT WITH EMPATHY

We treat people how we'd want to be treated; with kindness, dignity, and respect.

WE ARE TENACIOUS

We take on difficult cases. And we don't give up easily.

WE FIGHT FOR CHANGE

We campaign with others for improvements in immigration law and policy.

An opening message from our CEO, Neil Frackelton



NEIL FRACKELTON,
CEO

I am delighted to introduce GMIAU's Impact Report 2026, prepared by our staff to highlight our work across the North West, with a particular focus on Greater Manchester and Liverpool.

We provide free, specialist immigration legal advice and representation, alongside destitution support, policy and campaigning. We support people navigating an increasingly complex and often hostile immigration system.

Demand for our services remains extremely high, while access to legal advice across the North West is in very short supply. Despite these challenges, we continue to support as many people as our capacity allows. This report reflects some of our achievements and the difference our work makes. I hope you find the report insightful, interesting and informative.

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Political context

For people seeking safety and security in the UK, the past year has brought more uncertainty and more hostility. The Government's [Immigration White Paper](#) set out a more restrictive direction for immigration, while protests outside asylum hotels have continued across Greater Manchester. We have seen increasing hostility and targeting of the people we support, as anti-migrant rhetoric becomes louder and more normalised.

The [suspension of refugee family reunion](#), in the Government's attempt to keep families apart, has left people separated from those they love. Now, [proposals announced](#) by Shabana Mahmood could mean people waiting five, ten or even twenty years to settle in the UK. For people who have already spent years living with uncertainty, the prospect of being told to wait even longer is devastating. The hostile environment is not easing, and it is becoming harder and harder to escape.

All of this is happening while the legal aid crisis continues. People who desperately need a lawyer are struggling to find one, just as their rights are being increasingly restricted. Human rights mean little if people cannot access the legal advice they need to defend them. This is the reality in which GMIAU is working. But every day, we see the difference that people, communities and organisations can make when they stand together and refuse to accept this as the only possible future.

OUR IMPACT AT A GLANCE

A P R I L 2 0 2 5 - M A R C H 2 0 2 6

3,474

people got legal advice from us



2,817

people were given legal advice even though we could not take on their case



we received

5,688

referral forms asking for our help



182 asylum

applications and appeals for adults

106 asylum

applications and appeals for unaccompanied children

102 leave to remain

applications based on human rights

81 leave to remain

applications for people suffering from domestic abuse

655

Legal cases taken on

125

grants of indefinite leave to remain

254

grants of limited leave to remain

28

grants of refugee status or humanitarian protection

649

Legal cases closed

"A case that many considered impossible was successfully resolved thanks to your expertise and dedication. Your attention to detail, responsibility, and strong knowledge were clearly evident throughout." - client

Our Legal Team provides expert immigration and public law advice across the North West, helping people navigate complex legal processes and secure life-changing outcomes. This year, we provided legal advice to **3,474** people and took on **655** legal cases, with **407** successful grants of status, including **125** grants of indefinite leave to remain, **254** grants of limited leave to remain and **28** grants of refugee status or humanitarian protection. We also challenge unlawful decisions and hold the Home Office to account through the courts.

DOMESTIC ABUSE

A key priority of our work is helping people experiencing domestic abuse escape abusive situations and build safe, independent futures. Through the GMCA Domestic Violence Project with Rights of Women, we support people across Greater Manchester experiencing domestic and honour-based abuse who have no access to public funds. This year we supported **117** people, securing **44** grants for immediate access to public funds and **67** successful settlement applications, helping survivors build safer, more secure futures.

"The support I received was professional, clear and very reassuring during a stressful process. A special thank you to Nadia for her patience, guidance and dedication. I truly appreciate it"

REFUGEE FAMILY REUNION

Since the Refugee Family Reunion route was suspended in September 2025, we have continued to fight for families to be reunited. We delivered training and peer support on alternative Family Reunion routes, advocated nationally for the restoration of family reunion rights, and contributed to Safe Passage International's legal challenge. We secured the reunion of **2** children with their refugee parents, successfully challenged Home Office refusals, and continue to represent families in Gaza. We also secured a major Upper Tribunal victory allowing **3** boys and their elderly grandfather to join their family in the UK.

"Working with Decla has been an absolute blessing for our family. Her dedication, professionalism, and genuine empathy made a complex process feel smooth and hopeful. Thanks to her incredible support, our 4-year-old daughter was granted her visa, bringing our family back together, a life-changing moment that has given us the complete and happy home we dreamed of."

WINDRUSH

Through the Windrush Legal Initiative, we provide pro bono legal support alongside Bryan Cave Leighton Paisner, Charles Russell Speechlys, Debevoise & Plimpton, Dechert LLP, Latham & Watkins, Linklaters, Taylor Wessing and White & Case, filling a critical gap in the Windrush Compensation Scheme. Between April 2025 and March 2026, we recovered **£571,943** in compensation for **11** clients, successfully challenged decisions through **23** reviews, **6** pre-action protocol letters and **3** judicial reviews, and contributed to changes to the Scheme's rules on pension losses. We also delivered training to other organisations, sharing our expertise across the sector.

Work with children

141 asylum applications and appeals for unaccompanied children

101 immigration consultations for children in care

164 young people attending the **All4One** group

100% grant rate for **KIND (UK) project**

Unaccompanied children seeking asylum

We represent children who have arrived on their own in the UK to seek safety. Often they have undergone traumatic journeys to get here and once here, cannot feel safe and secure until they have received refugee status. As a local response to the legal aid crisis, all local authorities in the region fund GMIAU to represent children.

We also run the **All4One Youth Group**, where separated children can come together, practice their English, and build their confidence. This year there were **48** All4One sessions attended by **164** different young people, with some sessions attended by as many as **38** young people. Attendees often compare the group to a family, with one saying ***"no one here makes me feel safer than this group."***



Children in local authority care

Children who have grown up in the UK, and even who were born here, may reach adulthood before realising that they are not British by paperwork and that their immigration status is not secure. Sometimes for children in care, this is not identified, and even if it is, social workers do not know always know the routes available to resolve children's status. We're working to change that, by working closely with local authorities as well as directly representing children in applications for leave to remain, settlement and citizenship.

A young person we work with said: *"Getting immigration status sorted early would make such a big difference — it would give children in care a sense of belonging, stability, and hope."*

KIND (UK) Project

We work in partnership with KIND (UK), along with Central England Law Centre, Coram Children's Legal Centre, JustRight Scotland and MiCLU. Latham & Watkins are the project's newest pro bono partner, joining Clyde & Co, DLA Piper and Sidley Austin. The project helps children and young people in families and in care secure the British citizenship they are entitled to and the stability that comes with it.

Someone we helped said: *"I am and will be very thankful always as I was no one and you gave me a chance to do better for my family and grow in terms of education and my career."*

Destitution work

Our Destitution Team supports people across Greater Manchester and the North West who are experiencing homelessness or destitution as a result of their immigration status. The team provides support in urgent situations, including rough sleeping, eviction, fleeing abuse, and children being wrongly age-assessed. With qualified immigration advisers within the team, we can respond to immediate needs while also addressing the wider immigration issues people face.

Between April 2025 and March 2026, our Destitution Team supported **853** people, many of whom came to us facing homelessness and extreme financial hardship. **617** people were homeless when they first approached us, including **95** who were street homeless. Through practical, person-centred support, we helped **164** people move into stable accommodation, **71** regain access to public funds, and **234** improve their financial situation. We also supported **63** people with immigration applications and reached **529** people through drop-in sessions across **six** boroughs. Behind every number is a person who came to us at a difficult time and received support that made a real difference to their lives.

853

people supported in
total



529

people reached
through our drop-in
sessions



469

people supported with
their accommodation
and finances



RESS



boaztrust

We work in partnership with Boaz Trust and the Booth Centre through the Restricted Eligibility Support Service (RESS), commissioned by Greater Manchester Combined Authority in 2023. RESS combines housing support and legal advice to help Greater Manchester residents facing immigration-related barriers move on from homelessness and thrive. Its vision is that no one should be forced into homelessness because of their immigration status.

We delivered **32** training sessions and provided immigration advice to **509** people through RESS. A further **284** people received support with employment, accommodation and other needs, including **288** people on health and social care visas.

Policy work

Our Policy and Campaigns team exists to challenge and expose the injustice we see in our legal work, and to work alongside people with lived experience of immigration control to influence decision-makers.

This year we have increased our capacity to keep our communities informed about changes that affect them in a fast-paced and hostile policy environment with updates, information. Our collective **Expectations for Greater Manchester Politicians** gives us a lens through which to focus on some key policy areas:

Routes to settlement

In May 2025, the government announced sweeping changes to settlement rules that would leave people in limbo for decades. We have been fighting these changes by:

- producing guides for individuals, organisations and local authorities to respond to the public consultation
- organising a bus of 50 campaigners from Greater Manchester to attend a mass lobby of Parliament, where people from across the country met with over 100 MPs to ask them to stop these changes
- speaking out in the media about the importance of settlement

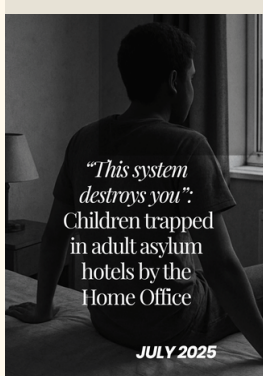
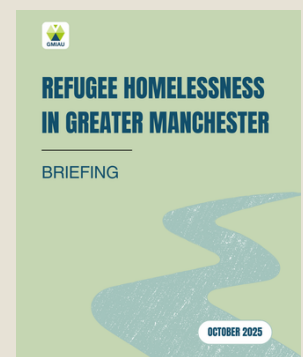


Community safety

With a shocking rise in racist mobilisations and harassment outside asylum accommodation, solidarity is more important than ever. GMIAU has taken a leading role in holding statutory bodies to account and keeping our communities informed. We published a statement in solidarity with people living in asylum hotels, signed by over 80 local organisations.

Homelessness

Our October 2025 briefing looked at the causes of a rise in refugee homelessness, with recommendations laying out the measures, both locally and nationally, that could improve access to accommodation for people recently granted refugee status.



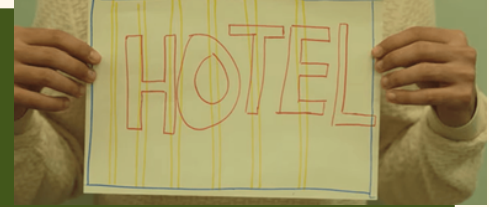
Age assessments

Our July 2025 research found that hundreds of children in the North West were being wrongly treated as adults following interrogations at the UK border and sent to asylum hotels. Our report centred the voices of the children we support who are being let down by this safeguarding crisis.

Campaigns

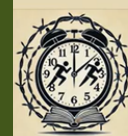
Our campaigning work is shaped by and often led by the lived experience groups we support. Some long-standing, some brand new, the brilliant people in these groups have brought campaigns to life and are inspiring others to do the same. Find out more about [our campaigns](#).

Greater Manchester Asylum Hotels Group had success with their statement in response to the protests outside asylum hotels. Their message: *"We hope you will see us not as strangers, but as new neighbours who want to live in peace and grow together with you."* Their statement featured in the local news, and many people got in touch to tell us they were moved and inspired. The group has gone from strength to strength: their statement was turned into a video by Stand & Be Counted Theatre and they have also spoken out about how the government's hostile asylum plans make them feel.



The VOICE, an action group of women on the 10-year route to settlement, are also raising their voices where so often lived experience and common sense are missing from the public debate. They wrote to the Minister for Migration and Citizenship with 5 other groups in September 2025 calling for a meeting to discuss the real-life impact of government policies, attended a parliamentary roundtable, and responded to the consultation on earned settlement.

The **All4One Young Leaders Group** focused their energy on their campaign **No Borders in Education**. They produced a video presenting their campaign asks. Young Leaders were also involved in our report on children trapped in adult asylum hotels and wrote to the Home Secretary, telling her that their experiences had made them feel unsafe in the UK. They also worked with the Refugee Council to co-produce an updated Young People's Guide to Age Assessments.



**NO BORDERS
IN EDUCATION**

Settlement and
citizenship for
children in care

January 2026

"Getting immigration status sorted early would make such a big difference — it would give children in care a sense of belonging, stability, and hope". Child in care

Early Freedom is our newest action group. Children and young people who have experience of immigration and citizenship issues while in care have come together to create change with local and national decision-makers. Their work has started to form part of GMIAU's briefings and trainings as we work with local authorities to improve their practice.

The landscape we work in is becoming increasingly difficult. The people we support face growing hostility, while policies and systems create ever more barriers and leave people without a voice. This makes our work more important than ever.

What keeps us going is the difference legal support can make, from securing someone's status to bringing families back together. We see people finding their voice, communities coming together and colleagues continuing to push for change.

Being rooted in Manchester and Liverpool gives us a strong sense of what we stand for. Both cities have long histories of solidarity and resistance, reminding us that change takes persistence and that we are part of something bigger than ourselves.

The challenges ahead will be significant, but so is our determination. By combining legal expertise, practical support and campaigning alongside people with lived experience, we will continue to challenge injustice and stand with those who need us. We are incredibly grateful to everyone who makes this work possible.



Your support allows us to keep fighting for change.

Thank you to our staff, without whom this work would not be possible.

To David, Ryan, Hannah, James, Laura, Isobel, Camille, Angela, Nadia, Maxwell, Kate, Nicola, Shakhura, Decla, Editte, Melissa, Suzie, Alex, Rory and Anais in our Legal Team. Maria, Asli, Michelle, Joe, Niloufar and Yamusu in our Destitution team. Amanda, Kathleen, Will, Fatou, Tania, Annie and Rivka in our Policy and Campaigns Team, and to Mona, James, Hassoun, Lana, Husna, Abbas, Emillienne and Neil.

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And to our pro bono partners: Bryan Cave Leighton Paisner, Charles Russell Speechlys, Clyde & Co, Debevoise & Plimpton, Dechert LLP, DLA Piper, Latham & Watkins, Linklaters, Sidley Austin, Squire Patton Boggs, Taylor Wessing, and White & Case.



If you're able to support us financially, every donation will make a difference.

Keep up with our work: visit our [website](#), sign up to our monthly [newsletter](#), and follow us on social media: [Bluesky](#), [Instagram](#), and [LinkedIn](#).