

# Navigating Asylum Project – Learning Partner

## Invitation to Tender

### Introduction

Refugee Action has 39 years' experience providing specialist advice and support to people seeking asylum. Our beneficiaries are some of the most vulnerable people in the country; having fled torture, persecution and war; since 2001 we have supported over 70,000 asylum seekers to access justice and support in the UK. Embedded in the refugee sector, we collaborate with colleagues to deliver and scale innovative practices that address the causes of poverty and injustice experienced by our beneficiaries and empower them to rebuild their lives. We enable organisations supporting vulnerable people from refugee and migrant backgrounds to strengthen their service capability and maximise our collective impact.

### Project Outline

**SUMMARY:** The Partnership will provide people seeking asylum with the information, support, and voice within the UK asylum system to navigate their journey effectively and remain safe and well. It will build the capacity and impact of frontline organisations to guide people early in their journey. It will enable Experts by Experience to co-design policy goals and campaign for an improved asylum system, and work with partners to win policy and practice changes that have a positive impact on people seeking asylum.

This will be facilitated by the coordinated approach of the Good Practice & Partnerships and the Campaigns Team at Refugee Action working alongside the seven partner delivery organisations.

**AIMS:** The Navigating Asylum Partnership will work to ensure that people seeking asylum in the UK can access justice and rebuild their lives. This partnership of vital regional charities will empower people to navigate the system effectively, and the [Stand Up for Asylum](#) campaign will secure concrete policy changes with & for people seeking asylum.

**LEARNING:** The 3-year Navigating Asylum Project provides many valuable learning opportunities. We want to be able to test new ideas, collaborate and apply learning through work that is informed by people with lived experience. The learning ambitions and questions will be developed with each partner organisation and with support from the Learning Coordinators at Comic Relief.

**See appendix 1 for further information on the programme**

## Learning Purpose and Outcomes

The Navigating Asylum Partnership wants to understand how the [Asylum Guides model](#) (see appendix 2) and our collaborative campaigns model can create a fair and effective asylum system for all people seeking asylum in the UK. It intervenes at the individual, organisational and policy level to create systemic change. Through our monitoring, evaluation and learning plan we want to understand the effectiveness of our interventions in creating change at each level and in amplifying systemic change. We want to **learn what is working and what is not** and use this to **continuously strengthen the program's impact**. We want the learning process to be a useful experience for all involved and supportive of meeting the objectives of the program.

The learning partner will deliver an evidence base for the program. You will achieve this by producing the following

Primary outcomes:

1. **Contribute to the strengthening of our monitoring and evaluation framework.** You will work with the program delivery partners on how to best demonstrate the impact of the NAP program in the work of their organisations. This will include defining the impact and progression indicators, agreeing methods for recording them (qualitative and quantitative), frequency, and identify what systems/tools would be required to capture the impact for people seeking asylum.
2. **Project impact.** In relation to each level of intervention (see below). This will include documenting the program's impact for partners in implementing early action approaches, the impact on people seeking asylum and their ability to engage with their asylum journey, key learning from project methodology and delivery journey, and how the program's partnership contributed to its impact.
3. **Analysis of the program's collaborative approach between the Campaigns and Good Practice teams at Refugee Action.** Evaluation of how Refugee Action integrates the experience of our capacity building work under the NAP into our campaigning: analyses on the process of integration, use of the frontline data and partner reach.
3. **Evidence of the implications of early access to justice in creating an effective asylum system.**

Secondary outcomes:

4. **Baseline data.** Produce baseline data to enable the program to measure the distance travelled during the life of the project. The baseline data will define the program partners' capacity to intervene early with their beneficiaries and prevent crisis before the program and

the agency of people seeking asylum system in driving their asylum journey at the program start.

5. **Progression towards the program objectives.** Describe the program's progression towards its objectives, achievements, key challenges and learning, and recommend how program delivery can be strengthened each year which will lay the foundations for long term sustainability.

In relation to each level of our intervention, we want to understand:

### People seeking asylum

The extent to which the Asylum Guides model:

- builds people's knowledge of the asylum system, confidence to defend their rights, and resilience.
- improves people's ability to navigate crises effectively.
- Improves people's ability to build local connections.
- improves people's access to justice and protection.
- **Improves people's digital skills and ability to access services remotely**

### Aligned Comic Relief questions:

- ***What are the needs and experiences of people on the move and their journey to settlement?***
- ***How can their stories be told and what is the impact of doing so?***

### Asylum Guides partners

The extent to which the program:

- enables them to develop and embed preventative capability.
- improves their ability to develop and embed preventative practice and legal literacy work.
- increases the capacity of frontline refugee support organisations to address beneficiary needs more long term
- Works preventatively to ensure safeguarding and identification of vulnerable populations
- Enables them to improve access to their 'front door'.
- Increases an organisation's ability to influence promotion of access to justice locally and regionally;

### Navigating Asylum Partnership

How does the program support/enable:

- Peer learning, capacity building and development of practice
- Sharing of learning and testing new ways of working
- Support through periods of change/adaptability
- Testing and developing of the program and its delivery through Human Centred Design approaches

- Enables them to inform and support national campaigning for a fair and effective asylum system.

### Aligned Comic Relief questions:

- *What can we learn from delivering in a COVID-19 environment?*
- *How do we ensure that we safeguard clients and staff well-being in this new remote environment?*

### Experts by Experience who become Asylum Guides

The extent to which the Partnership's governance and delivery structures:

- enable them to define the design, direction and shape of the program
- support them to co-design preventative practice.
- support EbE asylum guides to provide information to people seeking asylum in a safe and efficient way.
- support them to share information about their experience of the asylum system in order to inform national campaigning, including policy and research activities.
- provide them with opportunities to gain campaigning skills and engage in campaign activities.

### Aligned comic relief learning questions:

- *How can the sector better maximise the participation of people with lived/worked experience, so that refugees and people seeking asylum have greater agency over their lives and the systems that impact upon them?*
- *What are the risks associated with this work? For example, the risks to volunteers caught in complex and compromising situations and how this can be managed effectively.*

## Key Project Deliverables

The learning partners will provide the following deliverables during the life of the program. Each written product will be presented verbally to the Program Steering Group:

1. A detailed **learning plan** – no more than 15 A4 pages, which includes:
  - a. a detailed monitoring and evaluation framework specifying the data which will enable the analysis of the project progression and impact, and producing monitoring and evaluation tools to support the evaluation as needed; and

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- b. a baseline data describing the pre-NAP Program state of service provision for people seeking asylum prior to the project launch;
    - c. a Gantt chart describing the delivery plan.
  - 2. **Two written learning reports**, no more than 30 double-sided A4 pages, at the end of each delivery year, which answers:
    - a. Progression towards the program objectives;
    - b. Considers responses to each of the evaluative questions;
    - c. Initial impact on the program partners.
  - 3. **Final research report**, no more than 40 double sided A4 pages, including appendices which evaluates;
    - a. The value of the NAP approach on access to justice for people seeking asylum;
    - b. Program progression towards its stated objectives (answering each learning question);
    - c. Impact of the program on program partners, people seeking asylum, sector partners, decision makers and funders;
    - d. Key program achievements, challenges and learning;
    - e. Evidence of the implications of early action in creating an effective asylum system, including a limited cost-benefit analysis of early action approaches within the asylum system.
    - f. Recommendations including sustainability.
  - 4. **Communications and dissemination plan**, to support the development and delivery of the program's plans for external/internal communication and dissemination of the learning, findings and achievements.

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## Researcher Criteria

Refugee Action will be using the following criteria in assessing tenders.

### **Essential experience:**

- Significant professional research experience including leading a research project
- Interest and experience in evaluating early action or preventative practice programs
- Experience of writing published reports for academic and /or voluntary sector audience
- Experience of producing robust monitoring and evaluation frameworks to be used in capacity building projects
- Experience of collaborating with partners and stakeholders in the production of evaluation pieces focusing around improvement of service delivery
- Familiarity with the relevant evidence base, key issues and policy and practice context
- Experience of collaborative working
- Understanding and interpretation of the brief and its objectives
- Experience working with those with lived experience (either in the asylum system of beneficiaries of other social justice causes)

### **Desirable experience:**

- Have researched models of mobile learning and professional capacity building
- Experience in evaluating blended learning approaches
- Interest and experience of creating online monitoring frameworks.

## Timetable, Budget and Project Management

The research will be delivered between February 2021 to June 2023. The maximum budget for the evaluation is £15,000, inclusive of travel and expenses. Please include a detailed budget with your proposal, as specified below.

The project will be managed by Carolina Albuerne, Refugee Action's Good Practice & Partnerships Manager, and work closely with the Project Manager and the Program Steering

Group. They will enable the evaluator to access the primary beneficiaries, all necessary documents, and external partners as necessary.

## **Application process**

Applications will be assessed by an internal commissioning panel. The key dates are below. Please submit a written proposal in a word or pdf format no longer than three sides of A4 to Carolina Albuerne [carolinaa@refugee-action.org.uk](mailto:carolinaa@refugee-action.org.uk) detailing:

- Your experience
- Approach to the evaluation, covering each of the evaluative questions and deliverables;
- High level delivery plan specifying key milestones;
- Key risks and ethical issues to be considered;
- Budget which includes: Staffing costs (e.g. evaluator's time), travel expenses, administrative costs. Include VAT, or if VAT is not chargeable specify this. Please exclude report publication and dissemination costs.
- Two referees.

Proposals should be submitted by 9:00 am on Monday the 8<sup>th</sup> of February. Interviews will be held online between the 10<sup>th</sup> and the 17<sup>th</sup> of February where shortlisted applicants will be invited to present their approach to delivering the evaluation.

Please contact Carolina Albuerne at [carolinaa@refugee-action.org.uk](mailto:carolinaa@refugee-action.org.uk) if you have any questions about the project.

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## APPENDIX 1 -

### EXTENDED INFORMATION ON THE NAVIGATING ASYLUM PARTNERSHIP

#### PROBLEM:

**Empowerment:** People are unable to confidently navigate the asylum process because they are denied knowledge and power within the system. They urgently need to rebuild their lives, their wellbeing, and access support, yet they are deskilled and institutionalised. With holistic support and information, they can navigate their asylum journey successfully, secure specialist services they need to remain well and integrate and play vital roles in co-designing positive policy changes and leading the campaign for a fair and effective asylum system.

**Early action:** People seeking asylum need early access to information and support that will help them to navigate their asylum journey effectively. Too often people are denied support and justice because they do not understand the complex system they are in, plunging them into crisis. Early information and advice can prevent or deescalate those crises, giving people the legal literacy they need to determine their own journey.

**Justice:** People seeking asylum in the UK enter an adversarial asylum system which emphasises interrogation and suspicion over protection and care. The hostile environment policy requires each person to navigate this complex process and substantiate their claim unaided following cuts to publicly available legal advice since 2013. Unaware that the asylum process is a legal one, and without help to inform them of their rights and how to defend them, they are denied justice. People seeking asylum in the UK need dedicated support to gain legal literacy, engage meaningfully with the asylum system and secure protection.

**Voice:** People seeking asylum are experts in what they need to claim asylum effectively in the UK, yet are denied power in conversations shaping the services, practices and policies which shape their experience. With support and training they can co-design the changes needed to create a fair and effective system where no-one is marginalised, harmed or deskilled.

#### RESPONSE:

The Partnership will provide people seeking asylum with the information, support, and voice within the UK asylum system to navigate their journey effectively and remain safe and well. It will build the capacity and impact of frontline organisations to guide people early in their journey. It will enable Experts by Experience to co-design policy goals and campaign for an improved asylum system, and work with partners to win policy and practice changes that have a positive impact on people seeking asylum.

The Partnership will:



**Develop capacity.** Embed the Asylum Guide model in 7 organisations based in 7 key entry points within the UK's asylum system; enable partner organisations to mobilise and train volunteers to deliver the legal literacy programme to people seeking asylum, brief them at critical stages in their journey, and assist them to engage with the system meaningfully.

**Collaborate:** Using social tech we will work with partner organisations to provide people with Asylum Guides - volunteers with lived experience of the asylum system who can give people the information and support that they need to navigate their asylum claim effectively.

**Connect:** We will bring together the frontline organisations and their Guides to share learning from their Guides delivery to refine their practice. Social tech will enable partners to monitor, share and connect with one another.

**Amplify:** We will bring together Guides who are Experts by Experience to identify issues impeding peoples journey through the asylum system and develop alternative policy and practice positions, and feed into our Asylum System campaigns work to advocate for structured support earlier in the process.

## OUTPUTS:

**5154 people seeking asylum will have more power to navigate the asylum system.** Our Asylum Guides will empower them to understand the UK asylum system, their rights and options within it through 121 and group-based interventions, thereby increasing their resilience and confidence to assert their rights, navigate the asylum system, develop local connections and a sense of belonging.

**7 Frontline organisations covering 7 regions of the UK will improve people's ability to effectively navigate their asylum journey.** This network of excellent charities across the UK will take a more preventative approach and work together in peer support and learning networks across the UK that don't currently exist.

**People seeking asylum and refugees who have gone through the system supported to raise their voice as activists and experts calling for a fair and effective asylum system.** We will recruit and train Experts by Experience to speak out and influence the issues that they have identified as critical to change.

## IMPACT:

People seeking asylum have **improved understanding** of the UK asylum system, **confidence to assert their rights within it**, and **improved resilience**. Our seven Asylum Guides partners

will gather quantitative data on the number of people who a) access their Asylum Guides services, b) report progression using pre-and post-service feedback forms. They will also gather qualitative data quarterly to c) understand people's ability to defend their rights, navigate the asylum system and maintain their wellbeing via interview questionnaires with two clients per quarter. Our independent learning partner will assess the impact of the Asylum Guides services to increase people's power within the system.

**Frontline organisations embedding preventative approaches and collaborating with peer practitioners to develop practice.** Our Project Manager will gather quantitative data quarterly on the number of partners attending a) training on the Asylum Guides model, peer support meetings, and early action practitioner meetings, and b) the number of practice solutions co-designed by practitioners. They will also gather qualitative data from partners on c) on the benefits of practitioner forums to develop practice via feedback forms and an annual survey; and qualitative data via 121 reflection discussions to understand the value for d) partners and e) Experts by Experience of peer-led learning and social tech to strengthen preventative practice. Our independent learning partner will assess the impact of capacity building activity to enable partners to implement and sustain high quality preventative practice.

## APPENDIX 2 -

### ASYLUM GUIDES MODEL

Refugee Action believes that early action can increase the power of people within the asylum system, thereby preventing crisis later in their journey. For instance, providing good advice and information to people a) prior to their substantive interview clarifies their expectations and enables them to negotiate the system, or b) immediately after they have received a decision on their asylum claim, can prevent crisis. Frontline organisations play a vital role in supporting people seeking asylum, providing trusted information, support and advice. For this reason, we aim to both to develop people's power within the system and enable local services to develop early action approaches.

Since 2015 we have been testing two "early action" service delivery approaches for people going through the asylum system: Asylum Guides and Asylum Info Groups. Both approaches aim to reach people as early as possible in their asylum journey to enable them to avoid or de-escalate the crises that arise within this complex system, by ensuring that people have the understanding and resilience to cope. Until 2018 our Asylum Guides North West program enabled 21 Asylum Guides (volunteers, many of whom had previously journeyed through the asylum process themselves), to help almost 200 people through the asylum system. The Guides built trusting relationships with the person they have been 'matched' with to help them to understand the asylum system, their position within it, and to engage with it effectively at each stage of their journey. The project also designed and tested tools for enabling frontline organisations to adopt the Asylum Guides model: a volunteer-led, information-based and time-limited methodology. It

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enabled two frontline organisations to adopt the model by accessing the tools available through our [asylum guides digital platform](#) which we created with our digital design partners [CAST](#). Our 2018 evaluation of Asylum Guides demonstrated that it is a highly effective model for supporting vulnerable people through their asylum journey, and enabling frontline refugee support organisations to embed the methods in their practice thereby increasing its impact.

In 2018, our Good Practice and Partnership Team has piloted the scaling of our Asylum Guides model, our goal being to reach as many people claiming asylum who may need support during the process. We successfully worked with two organisations (Brushstrokes and Refugee Women Connect) to test the approach to ensure uptake, assess their context, resources and the support needed to implement the model, and using this to inform the potential to roll out the project, and measure its impact. We are building on this success to support other frontline refugee support organisations across the UK country to adopt this way of working.

In October 2018, we launched our Asylum Guides National Program through which we tested our national approach. Our aim was to incorporate a user led approach in the roll out and delivery of all our programs. Our Asylum Guides National Program Manager expanded the program scale, promoting it widely to ensure uptake from a variety of organisations in different locations and to create the Asylum Guides Network.

In 2019 we received funding from [Comic Relief's Across Borders programme](#) to develop our Asylum Guides work towards a national program as described in Appendix 1 and created the Navigating Asylum Partnership. This research piece will work on this current program.