



# PETERBOROUGH ASYLUM AND REFUGEE COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION

“Bringing People Together”



## ANNUAL REPORT

1 APRIL 2020 – 31 MARCH 2021

### Head Office:

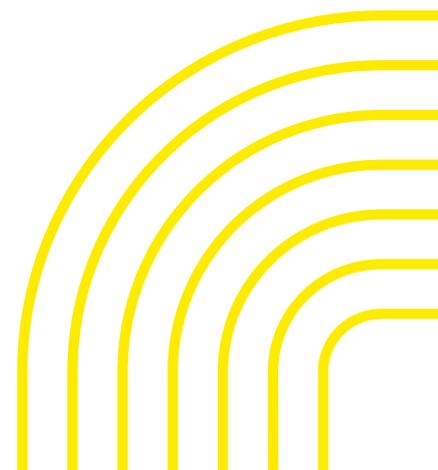
Unity Hall, Northfield Road, Peterborough PE1 3QH

Registered Charity Number (England and Wales): 1152592

Company Registration Number (England and Wales): 08397491

First African Community Organisation in Peterborough since 2002

2020  
2021



<b>LEGAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>VISION</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>CHAIRS FOREWORD</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>GOVERNANCE AND STRATEGY</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>RESERVES POLICY</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>PUBLIC BENEFIT STATEMENT</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>PROJECTS DELIVERED IN THIS YEAR</b>	<b>8</b>
1. Peterborough Empowerment Activity Community Hub	8
2. EUSS Advice	10
3. Syrian Resettlement	11
4. ESOL Classes	11
5. Wellbeing and Work for Refugee Integration Project	12
6. Mental Health Support	14
7. Lloyds Bank Foundation	15
8. Physical Activity	15
9. Census Support	15
10. Covid-19 Support	15
11. BBC Children In Need	16
12. Near Neighbours	17
13. Daughter of Jesus	17
<b>OTHER ACTIVITIES DURING THE YEAR</b>	<b>18</b>
1. PARCA Gift Give Away	18
2. Volunteering	18
3. Paul Bristow MP Visit	18
4. PARCA Civic Award	18
<b>WORK WITH REFUGEE SUPPORT NETWORKS IN PETERBOROUGH</b>	<b>20</b>
1. BAME Community Group Workshops	20
2. Multi Agency Forum	20
<b>BENEFICIARIES</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>FUNDERS</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>CHALLENGES AND COVID RESPONSE</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>UPCOMING PROJECTS</b>	<b>25</b>
1. Afghan Resettlement	25
2. Hong Kong Resettlement	25
3. Priorities for PARCA Going Forward	25
<b>CONCLUSION</b>	<b>26</b>



# LEGAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION

## Peterborough Asylum and Refugee Community Association (PARCA)

**Registered Charity Number: 1152592**

**Company Registered in England and Wales Number: 08397491**

Office Address: Unity Hall, Northfield Road, Peterborough PE1 3QH

Website: [www.parcald.org](http://www.parcald.org)

Email: [info@parcald.org](mailto:info@parcald.org)

Telephone: +44 1733 563420

Facebook: [www.facebook.com/parcald](http://www.facebook.com/parcald)

**Twitter: @PARCA1**

---

### Board of Trustees

Mr Nondo John Kasensa (Chair)

Mrs Jamila Abdu

Mr Rusom K Embaye

Ms Khadija Ali Hussein

Mr Mubunge Kumbi

---

### CEO and Company Secretary

Mr Moez Nathu

---

### Independent Examiner

Nashir Valani BSc (Hons)

MAAT VAT Accountancy

Services

60 Lincoln Road

Peterborough

PE1 2RZ



Refugees, asylum seekers, BAME and migrant communities and other disadvantaged people all have the skills and confidence they need to realise their potential and they are integrated in Peterborough, a city that respects diversity.

### **Aims and Objectives**

PARCA aims to improve the conditions and quality of life for refugees, asylum seekers and migrants who reside in Peterborough and its surrounding areas. It runs specific projects for young people and adults as well as through the following activities:

- Providing a one stop centre with advocacy; interpreting and translation; job search, training and skills development; advice and information including advice on welfare benefits and household matters.
- Providing refugees, asylum seekers and migrants with opportunities to meet one another, to access services including housing, education, and health, with activities to encourage the valuing of diversity, cohesion and integration.

Welcome to this annual report for the year April 2020 to March 2021. This year has been especially challenging for all of us with the Covid-19 pandemic. As I write this we are hopeful that vaccine distribution will help steer us towards the ending of the constraints we have faced, however it is still looking like we will have to live with Covid-19 for some time to come.

When the pandemic first started, we had a very large contract put on hold, which was for our Syrian Resettlement work as the Home Office froze the programme. This caused significant concerns for PARCA as it was our largest project and largest source of income. Despite this, we achieved growth over the year, due in part to a large number of grants coming through that were focused on the pandemic response. However, many of these grants have come to an end at the close of this financial year and we are therefore again concerned about the financial options available to us. We have decided that it would be good to explore building a more sustainable funding model to reduce dependence on grants and this is something we plan to develop over the coming years.

One thing is clear to me though, which is how well people have worked together when it is for the greater good of the community. PARCA has seen that with the very generous donations which were given for the Xmas gift appeal to help families who are less fortunate during these tough times.

Throughout the last year staff have been working hard at PARCA, some in front line roles and others behind the scenes to implement projects that will improve our facilities and services here at Unity Hall.

We have invested in more equipment for our youth group activities and are planning some great events as soon as it is safe and permitted to do so - keep an eye on our website and social media feeds for more details.

I'm sure that we all are looking forward to brighter times ahead and we hope that in 2022 and beyond that we are able to start moving forward from the very challenging times we have recently experienced.

Best Wishes,  
John Kasensa  
Chair of PARCA

# GOVERNANCE AND STRATEGY

## Trustees Annual Report

The Trustees, who are also Directors of the Charity for the purposes of the Companies Act, submit their annual report and the financial statements of Peterborough Asylum and Refugee Community Association (PARCA) for the year ended 31 March 2021. The Trustees confirm that the annual report and financial statements of the Company comply with current statutory requirements, the requirements of the Company's governing document and the provisions of the Statement of Recommended Practice (SORP) "Accounting and Reporting by Charities" (FRS 102).

The Board of Trustees are satisfied with the performance of the charity during the year and in the current position, consider that the charity is in a strong position to continue its activities during the coming year and that the charity's assets are adequate to fulfil its obligations. The legal and administrative information set out on page 2 forms part of this report. The financial statements comply with current statutory requirements for the management of charity finances.

## Structure, Governance and Management

PARCA is a charitable company limited by guarantee. The Company was established under a Memorandum of Association, which established the objects and powers of the charitable company and is governed under its Articles of Association.

The Trustees are legally responsible for all aspects of the governance and management of the organisation; its finances, its employees, its services and its legal obligations to the Charity Commission. The Board meets bi-monthly to consider all matters of strategic management, financial probity, policy and direction. Smaller sub-groups or working parties may be formed and meet between these full meetings. Responsibility for day-to-day general management and expenditure within planned budgets is delegated to the CEO and the Senior Management Team.

### **The methods adopted for the recruitment and appointment of new Trustees:**

It is the responsibility of the Trustees to seek out suitable new recruits to add skills and experience to the board. Potential Trustees are nominated by a current trustee or, if a member of PARCA for at least one year, may put themselves forward for election at the AGM. The Board may also co-opt a new trustee to meet the specific skills needed by the board.

### **The policies and procedures adopted for the induction and training of Trustees:**

An induction procedure is in place for new Trustees to ensure they are fully aware of the work of PARCA and their responsibilities as a trustee such as being issued with the Memorandum and Articles of Association, key policies and CC3 (guidance on the role of Trustees issued by the Charity Commission).

### **The organisational structure of the charity and how decisions are made:**

Strategic decision making is the responsibility of the Board of Trustees. The implementation of these decisions is the responsibility of the CEO and Senior Management Team, who relay any key information to the staff and volunteers.

**The major risks to which the charity is exposed and systems to mitigate risks:**

The Trustees identify the major risks to which the charity is exposed each financial year when preparing and updating a strategic plan, in particular those related to the operations and finances of the charity. The Trustees then review any major risks which have been identified and establish systems to mitigate those risks. The charity is satisfied that the systems are in place to mitigate exposure to any major risks which have been identified.

**The Trustees consider that the main risks for the continued undertaking of PARCA's work relate to:**

Fundraising – How we raise and manage the funds and resources we have needs to be considered. We are reliant on relatively small grants that only cover part of the resources we need to continue our core activities. To reduce risks of inability to secure the funds needed to cover our core work, we need to identify and develop suitable projects that are deliverable over several years, in order to stabilise the growth experienced during the 2020/21 financial year.

Staff Retention – We are dependent on the services of a very small team of specialist staff. If we were to lose key staff this would make it very difficult to continue to deliver services at the current scale of what is needed. To mitigate this risk, we undertake reviews with staff to ensure we are offering the development opportunities they need, therefore increasing the likelihood of retaining staff who are well motivated to serve PARCA and our communities.

Restructuring – We need to explore the correct structure to be able to deliver at the size and scope of our expanded delivery. This means really exploring the management structure and the staffing needed to deliver projects. We need to identify what core roles are needed in order for us to continue to serve communities in need, to guarantee that we have the paid staff needed and to ensure that volunteers who are essential to successful delivery, feel valued and supported in their roles.

Organisational Structure – We need to take some time to reflect on how we work and review systems that can be utilised to make us as efficient and effective as possible. We need to ensure we are always looking to improve how we work, so we can continue to use our resources effectively and continue to meet the growing demands that Covid-19 has exemplified.

Partnerships – We need to continue to identify and bring on board new partners who refer individuals and families in need of our services. We also need to identify and develop new partners that we can refer on to, so that the people we encounter in our work can access the support that is available across different organisations. In this way, we will be able to ensure that people facing disadvantage have access to services needed to help lift them to achieve their true potential. We know that we cannot do everything that our service users need and it is prudent and effective use of our time and resources to know who else can provide services needed by our service users.

Covid-19 – much of what we have done in the last 12 months of this reporting period has really helped us to adapt to the changing context of our communities going forward. We have had to be agile in our response to what our communities need, and moving into and out of remote services at short notice to comply with government restrictions. We know the communities we serve find it more challenging to access services remotely and we have had to change at speed but with full consideration of how remote delivery impacts some of the most marginalised communities.

# RESERVES POLICY

The Trustees reserves policy is to work towards achieving 3 months running costs to enable the charity to manage in the event of a fundraising shortfall or the potential need to wind up the charity. During this financial year, we achieved restricted reserves of £109,214 (against restricted income of £615,319, therefore representing just over 2 months restricted funds) and unrestricted reserves of £30,876 (against unrestricted income of £120,863, therefore representing just under 3 months of unrestricted income).

The Trustees recognise this is partly due to an increase in funders making grants unrestricted during the year, as they reflected that charities needed more flexibility during the pandemic. Trustees are keen to continue to build reserves going forward to ensure we can maintain the flexibility needed to respond to the needs of vulnerable communities in Peterborough and will be exploring further innovations to improve our reserves position in the coming 2 years.

# PUBLIC BENEFIT STATEMENT

The Trustees have considered Charity Commission guidance on Public Benefit and are satisfied that the charity is undertaking a wide variety of projects to support vulnerable migrant and refugee communities living in Peterborough. Our work is largely based in Unity Hall, which is at the heart of the most diverse ward in the city, where many of the migrant populations are living. Our work focuses on supporting communities through advice, advocacy and training to enable service users to integrate and become confident and independent, making a full contribution to their life in the UK.

# PROJECTS DELIVERED IN THIS YEAR

## PROJECTS IMPLEMENTED APRIL 2020 TO MARCH 2021

Over the last 12 months PARCA has continued to develop and deliver a range of projects to meet the needs of our service users.

### 1. Peterborough Empowerment Activity Community Hub (PEACH)

PARCA is just past the midway point on a 5 year project funded by The National Lottery (with match funding for this year provided kindly by AB Charitable Trust and Tudor Trust). During the last 12 months we have achieved the following as part of this multi-faceted project:

#### English Language Skills for Beginner and Intermediate

Delivered by zoom during the lockdown period, our English classes have now returned to be face to face. Classes take place 8 times a week and a total of 10 hours are delivered of varying levels. Demand for ESOL is high and the classes are delivered by trained staff and volunteers.

#### Youth Club and Youth Citizenship

The youth group meets three times a week. During the pandemic the youth group continued to meet via zoom instead of in person. We have covered a number of different activities with young people including sports, music, ESOL, arts, games, stop motion, outdoor activities etc. Now that we are able to meet face to face again young people come together to play table football, socialise and have fun. The times of the sessions change depending on whether it is term time or school holidays. We were also able to buy a new pool table and air hockey table to help the young people when it is safe to run activities at Unity Hall.

#### CASE STUDY

Anya is a refugee from Southern Asia with two children. When she approached PARCA, she was living in temporary accommodation provided by the Home Office but was struggling to access all of the support she was entitled to. She had no friends or family to help her in the local area and needed advice on claiming benefits as well as practical needs such as food and clothing. Our caseworker was able to support Anya to open a temporary bank account with Monzo which enabled her to receive both Child Benefit and Universal Credit. PARCA helped with the applications for these welfare benefits to make sure that she was receiving the correct amount. We also provided emergency food parcels and clothing which were delivered to Anya during the lockdown period. Anya was very happy with the support she received from PARCA and said that it made her feel more prepared for living independently now that she has been granted refugee status in the UK. Our caseworker continues to check in with Anya from time to time to offer emotional support and to see if there are any additional issues that she needs support and advice with.

## **Integration support services linked to settlement and employability**

Trained advice and support staff and volunteers provide a range of different advice sessions to help our clients integrate successfully in their new community. Whilst the centre was closed we ran an advice telephone line where people could call up for help. Many requests for support during the pandemic were for emergency hardship grants, food parcels and Universal Credit applications after people lost their employment. General advice sessions now take place at the centre three times a week for a total of 13 hours. We are currently running a drop in session but with limited numbers to enable social distancing.

## **Employment related advice and support**

We have supported people in a number of different ways to increase their employability skills and find a job. Support provided includes; access to training, CV preparation, job search & interview/ presentation skills, help obtaining a driving licence and/or car insurance etc. Employment support sessions take place at our centre twice a week for a total of 10 hours. Now that employment opportunities are opening up again we have seen an increase in demand for this type of support.

### **CASE STUDY**

Karolina is a female migrant from Eastern Europe. She approach PARCA for support with claiming her pension. She had two pensions from Latvia but together these only totalled £56 a month. She did not have a bank account in the UK which made claiming a pension here difficult. She was living with her son and his wife but really wanted to have her own place to live and independence. In addition, she had several health issues that weren't being treated properly. Our caseworker supported Karolina to apply for a pension and gather the documents she would need to prove her identity and address. This was soon being paid correctly. She also helped her to open a bank account and apply for council housing so that she could move out from her son and daughter-in-law's house. Finally, our caseworker helped Karolina to secure a free bus pass so that she could travel with ease around the city and liaised with her GP to make sure that she was receiving the right treatment and medication for her health issues. Karolina was very happy to have resolved so many issues by coming to PARCA for support and advice. She said that she really trusts our service and is sure that we will always do our best to support her.

## **Online training courses to build skills.**

Because of the pandemic we have had to run skills based training courses and workshops online. These workshops will hopefully now be able to take place in person again so we can reach a wider range of people and we are running food hygiene, IT and security courses for our service users.

## **Social action, volunteering, and cultural activities.**

Although it was difficult to run big cultural events this year, we did continue to encourage volunteering amongst our clients. Many of our volunteers worked remotely during the lockdowns providing advice, interpreting service and befriending for isolated people. Some delivered face to face services, either carrying out deliveries of food parcels to vulnerable people or volunteering at our centre once we reopened for appointments and activities. We increased our social media presence during this year of the project to be a source of information and to provide a place where people could come together online, even if they could not meet with peers in person.

## CASE STUDY

Adam, a Sudanese male arrived in Peterborough as an Asylum Seeker and he didn't know anyone in the city when he first arrived. The telephone number of PARCA was on a notice board in the house that he had been moved into through the Home Office. We found that he spoke Arabic and we linked him with existing people involved in PARCA who are Arabic speakers. He had a smart phone but didn't have any credit to join us, so we topped up his mobile phone so he could access our remote delivery including online workshops and also we supplied food parcels to help him throughout the lockdown. He was very appreciative of our support and started to make friends through involvement in the project and meeting other people in our sessions. We have therefore had a huge impact on reducing isolation and loneliness with Adam.

*"PARCA have made a huge impact on people's lives during the last twelve months ensuring delivery of food and other essential supplies to those in need, supporting those newly arrived in Peterborough and improving the lives of families who have experienced extreme circumstances. PARCA is unique in its reach and support to refugees, asylum seekers and other new arrivals making all feel welcome and connecting them with the local community."*

**Christina Alexander**

Communities Manager, Peterborough Council for Voluntary Services

### Steering groups.

We have member steering groups for young people and adults who meet once every three months (this took place both online and in person during this year). These steering groups help to guide the direction of the project, share feedback from clients and volunteers and they advise the board on what activities or projects PARCA should implement in the future.



## 2. EUSS Advice

PARCA successfully secured Office of the Immigration Services Commission (OISC) accreditation to provide advice to EU migrants who wanted to settle in Peterborough post Brexit. Additionally, we also secured vital funds from the Home Office to deliver advice and support for EU migrants who wanted to apply for pre-settled or settled status. This funding has been extended beyond this financial year in recognition that many potential applicants had missed the initial deadline for applications, due to the language barrier and lack of understanding of the requirements on them to apply for this status, to be able to continue to live and work in the UK.

As well as receiving funds from the Home Office for our legal work, we also gained a grant from Access to Justice which enabled us to provide crucial advocacy with our

asylum seeking clients who needed support to engage with their legal advisors and it also meant we were able to expand our EUSS service to ensure more people were aware of their rights and can be supported in the process to apply for pre-settled or settled status beyond Brexit.

### 3. Syrian Resettlement

Unfortunately, the Syrian Resettlement Scheme was paused throughout this year due to the ongoing Covid-19 Pandemic. During this time, we have continued to support people who arrived through this scheme through befriending support, which proved vital in helping to ensure we were able to continue to meet the needs of some of the most vulnerable arrivals in Peterborough. We have remained the preferred provider by Peterborough City Council under their agreement with the Home Office and have recently recommenced this service to new Syrian arrivals.

### 4. ESOL Classes

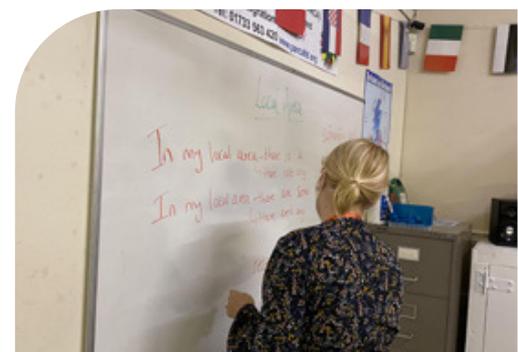
Each learner at PARCA is able to access 2 classes of 2 hours of ESOL per week. All together there are 8 classes over the week and structured around the language ability at the point of enrolment. Each learner has to complete 60 hours of structured learning time to be able to receive their certificate of achievement with PARCA.

We are proud that we are able to provide safe and nurturing environments for our learners, enabling them to progress. However, we also recognise that some people struggle to learn English and therefore we refer them for other classes in local colleges, to expose them to more practice. We also allow people to stay in their level for a repeat course if that is deemed suitable for that individual learner.

As well as having a qualified ESOL manager, we also engage volunteer ESOL teachers. This helps the volunteers as they build their own experience on their journey for qualification as an ESOL teacher themselves. We ground our classes on everyday English to help our learners to become more independent in terms of their skills and confidence with daily life and using their new skills in the community.

#### After 15 week sessions, the learners are able to:

- Ask and understand everyday questions
- Spell basic English words
- Use the newly learnt vocabulary
- Understand basic grammar rules and use them in everyday life situations



## CASE STUDY

A Russian lady called Lina was very shy and chose to speak to the ESOL teacher in Russian on her first day. She advised that her levels of English and confidence were very low. It took 3 weeks to get her to settle into the class and to start expressing herself with her peers. She gradually became much more confident and started volunteering freely when the group were asked questions. She became very good at conveying her thoughts and ideas in English. The absolute key for Lina, was building her confidence over time. Lina said, "The safe and friendly environment at PARCA has built my confidence and I would like to repeat this course again. Whilst I was also going to college, it was the classes at PARCA that really helped me to learn."

## CASE STUDY

Shamina came to PARCA to take some ESOL classes to improve her English but with the ultimate aim of finding work. In her first month she enrolled at Peterborough Regional College for 8 hours of ESOL a week and also with PARCA for a further 4 hours of ESOL weekly. She has also started an IT course which is 3 hours a week for 10 weeks with our partner GLADCA. Her CV is updated and she has started searching for jobs. She was helped through the application process and her interview was arranged, even taking place at PARCA following pre-interview preparation and successfully led to a job offer.

## 5. Wellbeing and Work for Refugee Integration Project

This project is based at PARCA in partnership with the Strategic Migration Partnership (SMP) and the East of England Local Government Association (EELGA).

The project comes in two main strands; well-being and work. The well-being side is headed by a qualified therapist working for the Refugee Council. The work aspect of the project is led by PARCA and the main aim of the project is to help people into work or help upskilling them on the journey towards employment.

Anyone who is a refugee or a 3rd country national who doesn't have a UK/EU passport can sign up to this project. Signing up consists of a skills assessment with the employment coach who will take information from the client such as work and educational history, some general skills questions, a questionnaire and then make an action plan for the client.

## CASE STUDY

Minerva was helped to secure a job as a teaching assistant in a local school and has also started a course to provide a qualification as a teaching assistant. Her CV was updated and she has also completed a retail and hospitality course with the Refugee Council and Starbucks. She has also enrolled for 8 hours a week of ESOL through Peterborough Regional College and is very excited about her future knowing she can provide the income needed to support her children.

## CASE STUDY

A Portuguese lady called Loretta completed her ESOL course with no absences at all. She really valued the time and contribution of the volunteer ESOL teachers. Loretta learned correct pronunciation of English words, how to use a dictionary and the correct grammar. Loretta stated "I feel like this place is blessed. I feel safe and always welcomed at the centre. I really enjoy the lessons with the volunteer ESOL teacher".

The Action Plan developed is a bespoke plan based on the wants and needs of the client. The goal is meaningful employment and the plan outlines the steps needed to be taken beforehand to reach their goals. A CV can be created or updated, free courses can be provided including; IT Skills, driving theory, life skills and job search. The project has also partnered with other organisations such as the Refugee Council and Starbucks to offer Retail & Hospitality courses. The client is provided with ESOL lessons to improve their English. The project focusses on widening the net of ESOL possibilities in Peterborough and as such will be giving clients the opportunity for more ESOL hours of learning each week at institutions such as; Peterborough College, GLADCA, Peterborough City College, PARCA and IQRA Academy. Our employment adviser also assists with job applications taking clients right the way through to interview.

*"Through the 'Well-being and Work for Refugee Integration Project (WW4RI)' we have worked with PARCA alongside two other Peterborough-based services. The Refugee Council provide the well-being therapeutic support, GLADCA deliver ESOL and PARCA hosts the refugee employment adviser, Tom. Tom has worked effectively with colleagues in GLADCA and the Refugee Council as they all have as their focus the best interests of their clients, and together they support people as they move between the service providers. Tom has a caseload of over 100 people who [he] is supporting and bringing closer to the workplace, helping them to improve their English and skills for employment."*

### **Louise Gooch**

Manager, Wellbeing & Work for Refugee Integration Project, Strategic Migration Partnership

*"PARCA has continued to serve the Community during the pandemic by coordinating the delivery of vital food, supplies and support to vulnerable residents in the local area. The team at PARCA works tirelessly to support the needs and demands of the communities, strengthening community cohesion, supporting people towards training and employment and resettling refugees.*

*GLADCA works in partnership with PARCA on the WW4RI project in supporting people by offering training and work experience opportunities, that can be added to a CV as well as building workplace confidence.*

*"*

### **Yasmin Ilahi**

Manager, GLADCA

## 6. Mental Health Support Project

Funded by Voice for Change England, our Mental Health Support project was implemented in order to offer support for vulnerable migrants, refugees and asylum seekers who were struggling with poor mental health during the pandemic. The aim was to reduce isolation and loneliness that had been growing amongst our service users and also to build our organisational capacity for supporting those with mental health needs which was a key concern during the early days of the pandemic.

### We worked towards these aims in the three following ways:

1. Increasing the number of volunteers at PARCA who could offer one to one befriending support in different languages. This enabled people to build relationships of trust with other and helped to relieve some of the loneliness and distress they were feeling. Volunteers were also able to give practical advice and signposting where appropriate and necessary.
2. Developing a series of activities that reduced feelings of isolation and mental health challenges amongst our service users.
3. Delivering mental health training workshops online for both existing and newly recruited staff and volunteers.

### CASE STUDY

Beata is an older woman from Latvia, who was struggling to use Zoom or WhatsApp. She participated in the project and her befriender volunteer supported her by teaching her how to use these apps. Now she can use her phone to call her befriender on Zoom, as well as access other services she needs from time to time. She is full of smiles when speaking with the befriender and can now use her phone to help her with overcoming isolation and keep in contact with friends and family both here and back home. She told her befriender that she is “very happy with PARCA, that I could not use my phone before, but now I am confident with these apps that help me keep connected. Thank you PARCA!”

### Outcomes

- 17 volunteers recruited and trained from different faiths, ethnicities and nationalities who speak others' languages to support our service users.
- 112 people participated in the project and reported that they were happy with how the PARCA team has supported them to overcome the isolation and loneliness they have experienced over the time of the pandemic.
- 33% state they feel very comfortable because the support they received during lockdown was in their own language. This enabled them to better understand the restrictions that were in place at different times and reduced their levels of anxiety.
- 82% said that they feel less isolation and loneliness and were also more confident using online software after participating in the project.
- The majority of participants said they have made new friends, feel less stressed and have built confidence through speaking with a befriender.

- Another outcome of the project is a reduction in incidents of domestic violence amongst the communities we support. In several cases domestic violence only came to our attention through the relationship of trust built with the volunteer befriender. Without this service we wouldn't have been able to address these issues.

## CASE STUDY

Grace is a woman from Zimbabwe, she thanked PARCA for support during her pregnancy over the pandemic period. After she reached out to her befriender and spoke about anxieties she was facing getting everything prepared for her new baby, PARCA was able to collect essential items for the baby such as clothes. She said, "Without PARCA befriender service, I will not be able to manage everything because of my very low income. I am very grateful for the support I have received"

## 7. Lloyds Bank Foundation

Lloyds Bank Foundation provided a grant during the financial year to help us to ensure our clients who are seeking asylum or have gained refugee status in the last 2 years, are provided with essential advice and support to enable them to settle and integrate in their new community. Through this project we provided support to engage with legal advisors, welfare rights advice and advocacy to ensure they were receiving their true entitlements and helping with other complex problems experienced through lack of awareness of UK structures and systems.

## 8. Physical Activity sessions

Over the course of the year we received grants from Barrow Cadbury and Sport England which enabled us to develop physical activity sessions as a relatively new activity for PARCA (we had done physical activity previously only with our Youth Project).

During the year we ran a wide range of physical activity sessions based on the expressed needs of our clients. This included team sports, where we could deliver them either at Unity Hall, when restrictions allowed or in local parks that are accessible to our participants. We also did zoom based sessions when meeting together was not permitted to encourage participants to still engage in physical activity to ensure their physical health did not deteriorate during lockdowns.

## 9. Census 2021

PARCA successfully contracted with the UK Online Centres to provide support to our service users to engage with the 2021 census. Our census 2021 team members helped a wide variety of people from many different nationalities to complete the online form. Many people did not understand the importance of the census, but we were able to communicate that it helps statutory services to plan for the future, to ensure they can have the resources needed for their local population in terms of planning for housing, education, employment and health etc. Our support meant many more people complied with the requirements to engage in this crucial survey, which also helped them to understand how services are shaped by the needs of their local population.

## 10. Covid-19 Support

During this year, we developed our services and support for people facing crisis. We thankfully received a number of grants from CAF Charity Hardship Fund, RAF Fund and Cambridgeshire

Community Foundation which funded a variety of emergency support strands to help our clients and also reach out to other isolated and destitute communities who we had not previously engaged with. The support we provided ranged from food parcels, to paying utility bills and rent to avoid evictions. These were often put into place very quickly to ensure we were able to respond to people facing crisis. Many people we supported lost work, as they had irregular work and therefore lost their employment during the pandemic. When this happened we provided the support they needed in that crisis but then also linked them to other projects to support them back into employment as soon as possible once the country started to open up again.

Peterborough City Council also provided a Covid-19 commissioned grant which enabled the team to support people to get tested and understand the requirements for self-isolation throughout the pandemic to help reduce spread of infections in workplaces and also in peoples homes. Our support through this was to have patrols in communities with high rates of infection and/or high rates of migrant & refugee communities, and therefore a higher rate of English as a Second Language who needed more support to engage with public health messaging around Covid-19 restrictions. We also received a grant from Peoples Postcode Lottery and Shrode Charity which enabled us to employ a Covid Response Support Worker – this role was able to coordinate what support people received in terms of the other grant funding we received, as well as translating government advice into community languages, provide PPE and develop a team of multi-lingual volunteers. We held regular sessions in the local community, giving people information in their language, passing out PPE such as face masks and sanitizer and informing them of the different projects that PARCA provides to encourage them to seek further support as their needs change over time.

### **The range of advice we provided to people included:**

1. Support in claiming Universal Credit, including advocacy over any issues with setting up their claim
2. Support in advocacy with landlords to agree repayment plans when they hadn't been able to pay rent due to loss of income
3. Budget advice
4. Support in looking for work, developing a CV and written applications. Support in telephone calls to arrange interviews
5. Signposting to other local services
6. Support in accessing health care, including testing for Covid-19
7. Referrals into PARCA group activities to reduce loneliness and isolation amongst migrant and refugee communities.

## **11. BBC Children In Need**

This funding helped PARCA to respond to the needs of children and young people from BAME and refugee backgrounds during the Covid-19 pandemic through provision of online activity sessions. We supported the children and young people to help identify things they had at home that could help them to maintain physical wellbeing especially during lockdowns and school closures. We helped them to identify things like tins of food being used for weights to exercise with and using gym equipment in the parks when that was available.

We provided other sessions such as how to deal with bullying, staying safe in online education, social skills, rights and responsibilities, education improvements, online games and staying healthy. The number of young people reached between 17-22 in each session. The level of connection was very good to break isolation, good outcome in mental health by reduction of loneliness and feeling more empowered through connections developed with their peers.

The conversation and leadership skills sessions were very good as they helped the young people to understand how they need to act as leaders by listening, developing empathy, being strategic in planning, through creativity and ability to inspire others to get involved by sharing the positive benefits of participating in the youth project.

Another topic created by the young people was healthy eating to avoid fast food, obesity, or reducing weight gain by cooking healthy food from watching YouTube under supervision of their parents. The range of activities delivered through this project helped the young people navigate what is widely reported as a very difficult period for young people. They came out through the other end of school closures and lockdowns, with much reduced impact on physical and mental health in comparison to their peers at school who didn't participate in youth projects during this incredibly challenging period.

## **12. Near Neighbours**

Through this project we recruited, trained and supported 12 "Youth Volunteer Ambassadors" to support engagement in local areas answering questions, providing information and signposting around public health messages. The young volunteer ambassadors circulated and supported strategic messaging in their community around public health ensuring that messaging was culturally specific through appropriate mediums and via people they trust and respect.

We also recruited and facilitated 16 - 25 participants for the delivery of the Ripple Effect Training, which enabled them to develop other initiatives to support young people outside of PARCA. These initiatives included developing new organisations and projects and supporting these new groups to apply for further funds from Near Neighbours.

## **13. Daughter of Jesus**

This local funder supported PARCA during the year with a fund for capital repairs to Unity Hall. This included repairs to the roof and replacing a fire exit door, which were essential to us continuing to use Unity Hall, which is at the heart of the communities we support. This support also enabled PARCA to build a hygiene point in the entrance to ensure that any staff, volunteers and visitors are easily able to wash their hands on entry to the centre.

# OTHER ACTIVITIES DURING THE YEAR

## OTHER ACTIVITIES DURING THE YEAR 2020-21

### 1. PARCA Gift Giveaway

PARCA's annual gift appeal was very well received in 2020. Families visited PARCA by appointment to ensure we could distribute the gifts in a Covid-19-secure manner. Unfortunately, part way through the gift distribution, Peterborough was put under further Covid-19 restrictions, so our volunteer team distributed the remaining gifts to the children's homes.

### 2. Volunteering

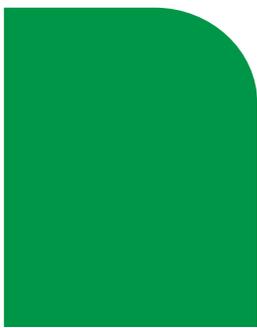
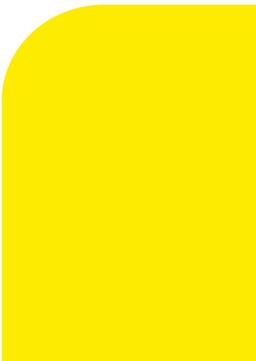
PARCA has a fantastic team of volunteers who make it possible to run the wide variety of projects that we do. Our volunteers also work "behind the scenes", with considerable time put in to ensure the smooth running of these projects and the charity as a whole. Their experience is invaluable and we are confident that each volunteer feels pride from what we are able to achieve for some of the most vulnerable people in our communities. Volunteering remains a strong area of our work, that helps our service-users gain experience to help them when they are ready and able to seek paid employment.

### 3. Visit by Paul Bristow MP – 23rd October 2020

PARCA was delighted to welcome Paul Bristow MP (Peterborough) to our premises. Mr Bristow MP took great interest in hearing about all the activities that PARCA provides for the people of Peterborough and surrounding areas. We appreciate Mr Bristow MP taking his time to visit us and learning more about our work.

### 4. PARCA Civic Award

PARCA was extremely humbled to win a Civic Award for our contribution to supporting disadvantaged communities in Peterborough. This builds on previous awards from the Lord Lieutenants office and local authority commendation that has been awarded in prior years.





# WORK WITH REFUGEE SUPPORT NETWORKS IN PETERBOROUGH

## 1. BAME Community Workshops

This project is based online and is designed for BAME community groups who wish to improve their knowledge and skills in a wide range of areas. The workshops provided were very well received. The workshops focused on communication, planning, finance, money & time and building structures for community groups.

## 2. Peterborough Multi-Agency Forum (for asylum seekers and refugees)

PARCA is proud that we continue to chair this vital forum for sharing information and partnership work across the city to support asylum seekers and refugees. This forum provides the opportunity to learn from one another and brings together statutory and voluntary sector organisations, so that we can provide holistic services and ensure that we minimize duplication of services. PARCA has chaired the forum for several years now and the group goes from strength to strength.

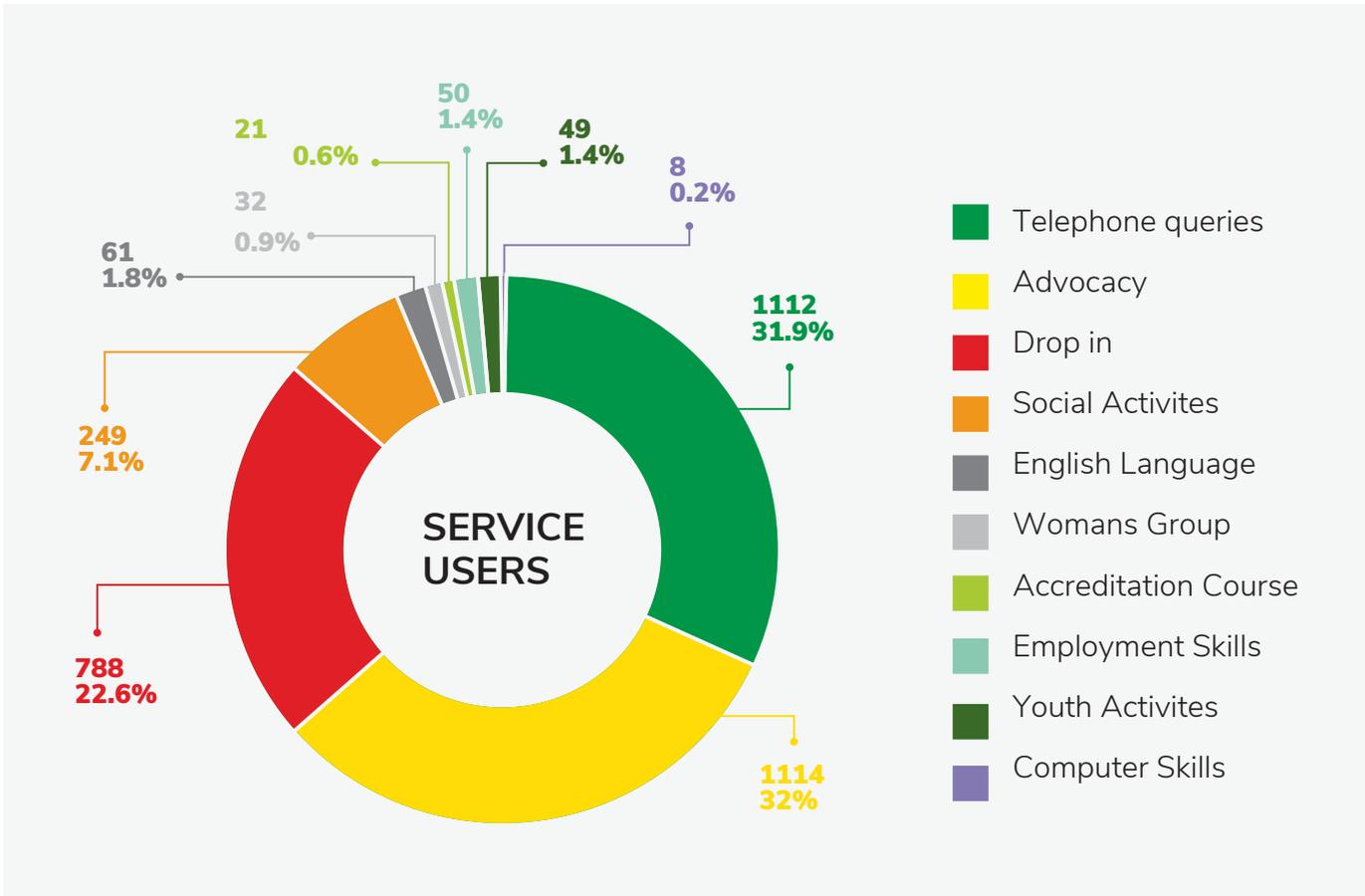
*"I am grateful for the opportunity the Multi-Agency Forum has given me to link with community and faith leaders and thereby stay abreast of the most crucial developments in the city's social and cultural life.*

*”*

**Rebwar Hussein**

Engagement Officer, Healthwatch Cambridgeshire

# BENEFICIARIES



The chart above reflects the beneficiaries we have supported over the last 12 months. During the year we managed to support 4716 people from different nationalities, and diverse age groups, with both funded and unfunded projects

The organisation has now has 19 employees (equivalent of 7.5 full-time staff). We are incredibly proud of what the small teams of staff and volunteers have achieved for our clients over the year.

# FUNDERS

We would not be able to meet our aims and objectives without the funders, who supported PARCA financially. Our THANK YOU goes to all funders and individual donors who support PARCA to help people in need.



# CHALLENGES AND RESPONDING TO COVID-19

We are proud to have been able to respond quickly to needs of those we support in a crisis. At the beginning of the lockdown last year there was a great deal of confusion and fear amongst the refugee and migrant community in Peterborough. Our staff and volunteer team worked tirelessly to contact clients, reassure them and offer different forms of support.

We set up emergency food parcels and hardship grants and helped many people apply for Universal Credit or other statutory financial support. We also translated information on Covid-19 into different languages and published it on our website so that people could use it as a resource to check the current government guidance. Throughout the year we have been sharing updates on Covid-19 (including testing provision and access to vaccines) through a number of different channels such as WhatsApp, Facebook and Instagram.

Another achievement in this year is that we have successfully managed to continue to engage people in training and skills development. The majority of this was carried out online but with the return of face-to-face services we hope to engage a wider range of people in these activities over the next 12 months.

It has proved to be very challenging to engage the same numbers of people that we saw accessing PARCA's services pre-pandemic. Our provision of digital equipment and data certainly supported a significant number of people to engage with PARCA's projects during the lockdown period when we had to deliver activities remotely but there were many who didn't have the confidence or digital skills to connect with us when we couldn't meet in person.

Our centre reopened briefly in 2020 but then had to close again when Peterborough was moved into Tier 3 of restrictions. Activities we had planned to celebrate Christmas had to be cancelled and we had to stop face-to-face appointments again.

The constant changes to restrictions affected our provision and ability to plan. It also meant that, even when we were able to reopen the centre, some people did not return. They had either moved away from Peterborough during the pandemic or still did not feel completely comfortable mixing with other people. We have seen numbers of people attending the centre gradually increase over the past few months and we are working hard to raise awareness about the services on offer and the safety measures we have put in place to reassure our service users. We are doing this through an increased social media presence and through working with local Refugee Community Organisations.

We hope that over the next 12 months we will be able to return to pre-pandemic levels of engagement. We also anticipate an increase in demand for our services as protections put in place during the pandemic come to an end. This includes the Furlough scheme, ban on evictions and emergency accommodation provided by the Home Office and Local Authorities (Everyone In).

“PARCA have been an invaluable source of support to residents throughout the COVID crisis. They have worked tirelessly day after day on the streets of our communities, advising people on how to keep themselves and their families safe, and also signposting them to get support to help them isolate and cope with the financial hardship they might be facing.

PARCA have without question become a critical part of our partnership ‘frontline’ team and without their language skills, knowledge of communities and amazing dedication we would not have been able to reach so many people in Peterborough.

”

**Rob Hill**

Local Authority Assistant Director and Chair of the Peterborough Rapid Response Outbreak Team

Funding continues to be an ongoing challenge, and whilst we successfully fundraised to maintain our services over the year, the pausing of Syrian Resettlement meant that we lost a significant amount of our budgeted income.



# UPCOMING PROJECTS

## 1. Afghan Resettlement

In August 2021 a crisis began to unfold in Afghanistan as the American and British forces withdrew from the country and the Taliban took back control. Many Afghan lives were put in danger and they were forced to flee their country. Britain began evacuations of people who had worked with the British Army and also committed to a resettlement programme which would bring a total of 5000 people to the UK in the first year and up to 20,000 over the coming years. At PARCA we held an emergency meeting in collaboration with the Hazara and wider Afghan community to see what we could do to support those fleeing from this crisis. We have since been designated as the lead Afghan Resettlement provider by Peterborough City Council and have begun to collect donations of clothes and household items in preparation to welcome the new arrivals. We have also been supporting several Afghan clients with family currently in Afghanistan by providing emotional support and advocacy to facilitate the evacuation of their relatives where possible.

## 2. Hong Kong Resettlement Support

The situation in Hong Kong has also become an issue that has resulted in the UK government pledging that 3 million people from Hong Kong are entitled to resettle to the UK. Whilst their needs will be different, as they largely speak and understand English systems, they will still need support to help them successfully integrate in the UK. At the end of 2021, PARCA was advised that we have secured funding through to the summer of 2022 to support these new communities to settle and integrate in Peterborough and the East of England region.

## 3. Priorities For PARCA Going Forward

- Increasing income to be able to increase the hours of work of our dedicated team.
- Refurbishment of Unity Hall.
- Reducing hate crime against our service users by increasing our advocacy and awareness raising in the community.
- The need to continue to build strong relationships and partnerships with local and national bodies.
- Continued investment in staff professional development through in house and external training opportunities.
- Challenges of adapting to the threat of Covid-19.

# CONCLUSION

PARCA is proud to have conscientious and dedicated staff and volunteers who work incredibly hard, either in frontline delivery of projects or behind the scenes. They are very well motivated to provide the best possible service for some of the most vulnerable in our communities.

We thank you for your interest in our work and encourage you to support our organisation in whichever way you can, be that through funding support, donations, partnerships, working for us or volunteering.



Please follow us on Facebook and Twitter to keep up to date with our work.





**PETERBOROUGH  
ASYLUM AND  
REFUGEE COMMUNITY  
ASSOCIATION**

**Office Address:**

Unity Hall, Northfield Road, Peterborough PE1 3QH

Website: [www.parcald.org](http://www.parcald.org)

Email: [info@parcald.org](mailto:info@parcald.org)

Telephone: +44 1733 563420

Facebook: [www.facebook.com/parcald](http://www.facebook.com/parcald)

Twitter: **@PARCA1**