



**Strategy 2019-2022**  
**Settled Lives, Strong Voices**

## Who we are

SLRA is a front line community organisation working alongside refugees, asylum seekers and other migrants who are at risk or in crisis, because of past trauma or because of restrictions related to their current immigration status. We have been working in South London since 1991 and we are a well regarded and trusted local service able to clearly evidence our impact.

This strategy covers the period from January 2019 to Jan 2022. It outlines our achievements so far, our strategic aims for this period and how we plan to achieve our ambitions. Our strategy will provide a guide to our Board of Trustees and all other stakeholders for the planning, monitoring and evaluation of our services and activities . Further detail is set out in our Finance and Fundraising Strategy and our Delivery Plan.

### Our Vision

Migrants are welcomed and valued participants in our community.

### Our Mission

To ensure that migrants in South London are active participants with access to justice and opportunity.

*" I was a teacher in Syria, then I came to the UK . I feel myself now, a lot of improvement, not like when I arrived: then I felt scared, now I feel a little bit confident. I was helped by SLRA and now I have started volunteering. I feel that here at SLRA we are like a big chain together, we all do what we can, it is an amazing team, like each one complete the other. I love this."*

## Where we are now .....

Our last Strategic Plan ran from 2015 to 2018. In those three years our services reached more people than ever before and we grew and developed our services to meet the changing needs of those we work with.

### In 2018

- More than 900 people used our services and we trained and supervised more than 50 volunteers.
- We strengthened relationships with statutory and voluntary sector partners.
- Our staff team continued to grow and diversify.
- We provided training and advice to social work students, social workers, teachers, foster carers and staff and volunteers running local community groups.
- We increased our Immigration advice expertise and capacity with our OISC regulation raised from Level 1 to level 2 .
- We began to move beyond a traditional model of advice giving by developing skills building, self-advocacy and peer support initiatives.
- We established a counselling service to support our advice giving.
- We introduced regular, external clinical supervision for all our front line staff
- We retained our Advice Quality Standard accreditation
- More young people than ever attended our weekly youth club and a range of weekend and holiday activities.
- We refined our established monitoring and evaluation methods and introduced new tools.
- We used evidence of our impact to secure support for new projects.





# The Challenges ahead ....

The last few years have seen the context within which SLRA works become increasingly challenging. We are proud of our achievements but fundamental challenges remain for the people we work with, for our organisation and for others locally who are working to ensure that South London is a place where migrants are welcomed and thrive.

## The people we work with

The challenges facing migrants are well documented in research and further supported by our own consultations with clients, volunteers and partners.

The government's hostile environment agenda, severe cuts to local authority funding and to Legal Aid have had a devastating effect on vulnerable migrants, pushing many into abject destitution and creating fear of approaching statutory services for even essential needs.

A lack of access to free, high quality immigration advice and casework in general and particularly in South West London means that people too often have no route out of hardship and destitution and so face huge barriers to settlement and to realising their potential.

We believe that migrants have a vital contribution to make and that with timely specialist support and accessible opportunities to gain knowledge and skills all can thrive.

## Our organisation

Our advice and casework services have seen the direct effects of increasingly restrictive immigration policies through the increase in both volume and complexity of people's difficulties and the number of people who are destitute and homeless.

We are committed to the involvement and representation of the people we work with at all levels of our organisation.

We work to ensure that we are able to secure the funding necessary to plan and deliver our services and to respond flexibly to unanticipated changes to policy and legislation.

Demand for all our services continues to increase year on year.

## The Wider Context

Mainstream services, under pressure from ongoing cuts to their resources, lack the specialist knowledge and the capacity to meet the complex and multi-layered needs of vulnerable migrants.

Voluntary and community sector organisations are struggling to meet demand and reduced funding means that many services and projects on which migrants depended for specialist advice and support have disappeared.

## Looking to the future

In developing this strategy for the coming three years we have spent time talking and listening to a wide range of people including our staff, volunteers, partners and other stakeholders. We have developed a Theory of Change which puts the experiences and aspirations of the migrants we work with at the heart of our planning. Our strategy will allow us to meet the challenges we face and to have a positive impact on the lives of many more people.

### Our strategic aims are:

- Reduce the impact of hardship and poverty.
- Increase migrants' capacity to advocate for themselves and gain access to justice.
- Create opportunities to include migrants as active participants in South London .
- Involve our service users at all levels of our organisation .
- Use our learning and amplify the voices of those we work with to influence .



## Maximising our impact

Over the last 3 years the number of people accessing our service who are experiencing severe hardship has increased hugely and the number who have fallen into destitution and homelessness has increased by 40%.

Too often vulnerable migrants are unable to access the advice and support **they need when they need it and end up homeless or unable to feed and clothe themselves and their families. Distrust of statutory services means that many of those we work with do not seek help until they find themselves in crisis and a lack of accessible immigration advice means that people can find no route out of hardship.**

**We plan to develop our services in line with our strategic aims so that we are better able to address the ongoing need for crisis support while also intervening early whenever possible more effectively prevent people from falling into crisis .**

**In the longer term our aim is to provide people with knowledge of their rights and entitlements and the self advocacy skills needed to access these.**

**We understand that people need different types of support and opportunities at different times and so our services and activities will be structured as follows:**

### Help in Crisis

Effective and accessible specialist advice and support for those who find themselves in crisis.

### Early intervention

Intervene at the earliest possible stage so people avoid crises and gain confidence and skills.



### Self advocacy

Build resilience and capacity so that people better understand the systems which affect them and can advocate for themselves

## Our work 2018 to 2022

We have identified the actions we will take to achieve each of our aims over the next three years.

### Reducing the impact of hardship and poverty

- Increase our capacity to provide free, high quality immigration advice so that more people are able to regularise status and settle.
- Work towards providing advice at OISC Level 3
- Identify opportunities and develop services and activities which intervene early to prevent crises.
- Focus our advice and support on crisis points and transitions including young people leaving care, those who have recently secured refugee status, families with NRPF
- Establish a specialist destitution prevention team to provide advice and casework to reduce and prevent the impact of destitution.
- Extend our counselling service to reach more people including young people

### Building capacity and Resilience

- Offer a range of opportunities including workshops, training and ESOL for people to gain knowledge and skills for self advocacy
- Extend our community connections project to include peer to peer learning and support in a range of outreach venues.
- Provide capacity building support to more local community groups.

### Promoting Inclusion

- Provide volunteering opportunities for local people
- Run at least one public event each year
- Build links with local groups and activities to promote inclusion.
- Take opportunities to publicise the achievements and contributions of those we work with.

### **Involving Service Users**

- Establish an effective youth council and at least one user group for adults and families
- Increase our expertise and our capacity to provide consultancy and support to community groups.
- Promote effective processes for capturing the experience and voices of young people in 2 local authorities.
- Review and further improve our methods of gathering feedback to ensure accessibility.
- Ensure that the views of users are heard at Trustee Board level.

### **Influencing Policy and Practice**

- Further refine our monitoring and evaluation tools.
- Commission at least one external evaluation of our work with adults and families.
- Increase our provision of training and advice to staff and volunteers in other agencies, particularly Social Services and schools.
- Capture the experiences and amplify voices of those we work with to ensure they are heard.
- Take an active role in local network groups and consultations.





# Making it work

## 1. Partnerships and collaboration

We can't achieve our strategic aims alone. To achieve our ambitions we will work with a range of local voluntary and statutory organisations in order to meet the complex and ever changing needs of those we work with. We will maintain and develop partnerships we already have while developing opportunities for new partnership work particularly in relation to providing immigration advice, housing options and mental health support.

## 2. A strong and adaptable organisation

We will continue to ensure that our organisation has clear and effective governance, policies and procedures and that our services and activities are delivered to a high standard. We will retain the Advice Quality Standard in 2020.

We will effectively communicate our mission and values clearly to stakeholders and potential supporters through a range of media.

## 3. Managing our resources to deliver our strategic aims

We will sustain current levels of funding and aim to increase our management and project resources during the life of this strategy. We will implement a new Funding and Income Generation Strategy which will aim to reduce our reliance on restricted funds by exploring other sources of funding and to increase our free reserves.

However, we recognise that income from trusts and foundations will continue to be critical and we will continue building relationships and ensuring that we provide excellent value for money.

## 4. An expert and well supported team

We recognise our people as our most valuable resource and will continue to invest in our team of volunteers and staff. We will provide clinical supervision for all frontline staff and agree training and development plans with all staff and volunteers.

## 5. Mitigating Risks

Our Risk Register is regularly reviewed and action taken to identify and mitigate risk in relation to governance, external factors, finance and operational issues which might impact on our strategic aims.

## 6. Monitoring and reviewing

The Director and Trustees will be responsible for managing the implementation of this plan and collating information from monitoring systems, team members, partners and service user feedback in order to review progress. Progress reports will be presented to Trustees at Board meetings (every 6 months) and amendments may be made. A reviewed and updated version of the plan, reflecting changes in circumstance, will be produced each every year.



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