

Our year together

2022 - 2023



Registered Charity: 1158551

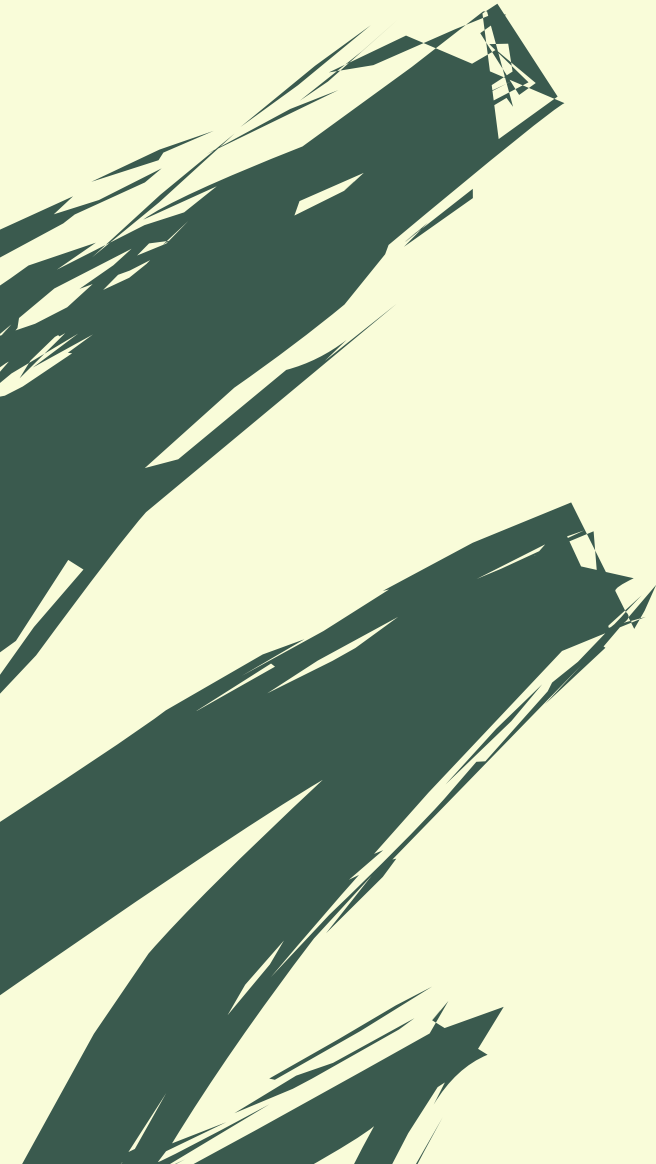
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Hello from our team

“Becoming a management group member has opened up my eyes to the operation of WAST and understand what members and the leadership need to make WAST work. It is a joint effort. We all help to spread our message, encouraging our volunteers and funders to keep assisting us and market the organisation so good Samaritans know about it and see how they can assist us.”

Mia - management group member



“As a grassroots coordinator of WAST, the end of the year is the time to reflect on the progress we have made, express gratitude and inspire others to continue their support.

It has always been a delight to support, encourage and empower WAST women as they journey through the hostile asylum system. Reflecting on the past year, we have faced challenges, embraced growth opportunities, and achieved amazing milestone together. My highlight of the year has been the remarkable resilience of WAST Women despite all their difficulties, and the Management Team with their collective effort is what fuels our mission.

We have been encouraged by the dedication and unwavering support of the WAST Trustees and our Development Manager Yasmine. The impact we create together is not measured in numbers alone, but the lives we touch and the hope we ignite. Thank you all for being part of this incredible journey and champions of change.”

Eunice - Grassroots Coordinator





“I'm deeply impressed by the progress our organisation has made, all thanks to the unwavering commitment of all our members.

At WAST, we've created a welcoming, safe, and empowering space for everyone. The relentless resilience of our members in ensuring their voices are heard, even in a challenging environment, is truly inspiring.

Thanks to Eunice's invaluable support, the management group have been able to work collaboratively to bring to life projects and activities our members have been eager to be a part of.

Witnessing the growth and infrastructural development is a genuine privilege, and I hope that the trauma-informed model of support WAST has adopted will ultimately serve as a powerful vehicle for change

Yasmine - Development Manager



Who we are

Our Mission

We are led by and for women seeking asylum in Greater Manchester. We campaign for social justice and women's rights through a peer-led support model that helps women find their place in the UK.

Our Vision

A society where compassion, respect, inclusion and empowerment enables women to reach their potential and have a voice within an increasingly hostile environment.

Our Values

Compassion
we empathise

Respect
we listen and believe

Inclusion
we welcome

Empowerment
we raise women's voices



Our organisation

Our grassroots coordinator and development manager support the WAST management group which is made up of 10 women from our network. They volunteer their time and use their lived experience of the UK's hostile immigration system to shape our organisation and act as peer leaders to our growing network.

We hold annual elections for our management group where our network elects members. Our re-election was held in May 2023.

Our board of trustees are responsible for the governance of our organisation. We currently have 7 Trustees, 4 of which have lived experience of the asylum system.

Who we work with

We work with 178 women and 50 children who are living within the UK asylum system. We support women from:

Afghanistan	The Congo	Iraq	Namibia	Somalia	Trinidad
Albania	Eritrea	Jamaica	Nigeria	Sri Lanka	Uganda
Bangladesh	Gambia	Kazakhstan	Pakistan	Sudan	Yemen
Brazil	India	Kenya	Russia	Syria	Zimbabwe
Burma	Iran	Malawi	Sierra Leon	Tanzania	



A snapshot of our year together

93

new members

22

women got
their stay

48

Friday drop-in
sessions

10

Cooking
sessions

4

protests
attended

18

sewing
sessions

3

choir
performances

£188,870

grants and
donations
raised

What we've achieved

Over the past year we have gradually returned to full strength, resuming all our face to face activities. During this time, we have welcomed 93 new members into our network growing us to 178 members and 50 children.

Our work is guided by our values and helps us achieve our vision for society.





Compassion

With thanks to public donations of fabrics and sewing materials we were able to restart our sewing group. These sessions allow the group to express their creativity through designing clothes and household items, which are all sold at outreach community events we attend to boost WAST's funds.

Compassion

Our nightingale choir has performed at high profile events in venues across Manchester including at Salford Sacred Trinity Church for Amnesty International, at the 50th birthday celebration of the Royal Northern College of Music and at our own special event for Refugee Week at Manchester Central Library. Our choir challenges misconceptions and encourages compassion for all who are experiencing life far away from home.



Compassion

The cornerstone of WAST, our Friday drop-in, continues to thrive and strive consistently attracting an average of 70 women each session. Using the skills our management group acquired through the trauma informed support training they are building a programme of activities to animate drop-ins. This will create a vehicle for the women to get to know each other better, share experiences and strengthen group unity.



Respect

Our partnership with Manchester Immigration Aid Unit (GMIAU) continued this year enabling us to support 10 women each month with free legal advice. GMIAU support the women to gather evidence for their asylum cases and also to lodge fresh claims and appeals. This gives the women vital awareness of their rights as asylum seeking women in the UK.

Respect

Women in our network told us they want the choice to touch and eat food they wish to eat. Food that reminds them of home. My Culture My Cookbook was a 12 week cooking project where the women spent time together and learning about each other's cultures. This helped alleviate the daily stress the women experience, reducing social isolation and re-humanising culinary experiences for them. The resulting cookbook is available to buy to support our work



Inclusion

Through a new partnership with the University of Manchester students from diverse backgrounds host weekly English conversation classes. The collaboration has proven to be immensely beneficial, fostering a supportive learning environment and promoting the benefits of intercultural exchange and understanding. The sessions are dynamic and engaging for both WAST participants and the students.



Inclusion

Our partner Afrocats were successful in securing a 12-month funding bid to deliver dance sessions for our network. The dance sessions encourage the women to explore new styles of dancing and choreography, drawn from their different cultures, in an inclusive way to enhance their self-confidence and overall wellbeing.





Empowerment

We continued to raise our voices and contribute our experiences to the ongoing debate about the asylum system. We shared our concerns about the anti-refugee Bill, joining over 320 organisations to express our horror in a in an open letter to the Prime Minister. We joined the protests calling for Manston detention centre to be shut down, gaining coverage in The Meteor for Eunice's powerful speech. We also continued to raise the alarm about the appalling housing situation many of our members experience.

Empowerment

We established a new campaigning group to plan for the 'What About Us?' campaign, focusing on issues facing young people in the asylum system as they leave the education system. Migrant Organise have supported this by sharing valuable insights, emphasising the importance of collective action in fighting for the rights of our members and amplifying their voices.





Time to celebrate

Our first Christmas party since before the pandemic brought together women and their children from our network.

Organised by our management group with donations from the public the event helped us end the year with a joyous and meaningful celebration. It not only provided an enjoyable and memorable experience for the women and their children but also emphasised the importance of community and support.

Time to celebrate

Thanks to the support of public donations we were able to take 150 women from our network and their children on a much needed trip to the beach to support their wellbeing.

My family really enjoyed the trip at the beach last year, the atmosphere was really good. We don't get fresh air out of the city very often and my son has never seen the sea before.” - Juliana



Strengthening our organisation

Through our collaboration with the Safer Foundation, we received invaluable support to review our safeguarding policies, enhance our processes and train our trustees and staff.

We commissioned Bright Thing CIC to host a Development Day with the management group, trustees and staff. Following this Barbara Guest, a consultant and friend of WAST, hosted a second session to clarify our structure and the terms of reference for the management group and trustees. Both successful pieces of work identified the need to conduct an organisational review of our work, including mapping different women's journeys through WAST. This project is managed by Barbara Guest and overseen by a Project Board with representatives from the management group, trustees, staff and WAST members.

Responsive support

This year we faced considerable challenges as our partner Migrant Destitution Fund had to pause their financial support due to lack of funding. In response to the dire circumstances faced by the 35 destitute women in our network, we launched Unseen and Unheard, a highly effective fundraising campaign that enabled us to raise an emergency fund that ensured we could support the women for 6-months.

"With the Migrant Destitution Fund, I was able to buy food, toiletries, top-up my airtime, just my basic needs. Since the fund closed it has been a struggle for me to afford my very basic needs. It is distressing for me, and it affects me mentally. My dignity has been taken away, it's a tragic and very difficult life." - An anonymous destitute member

Thank you to our funders

Our work wouldn't be possible without the support of our funders, donors and supporters. You are all amazing!



You can support our work by making a donation on our website wastmanchester.com/make-a-donation

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