



# STRATEGY 2018-2021



## **Executive Summary**

We are excited about the future and our aims over the next three years. Throughout the whole of our organisational history, concern has been high about the impacts trauma has on the mental health of refugees and people seeking asylum. We will be launching a new line of work which sets out to address better wellbeing for all, and specific therapeutic work for those who need it. All of our activities will be designed with the support of mental health experts, supporting us to alleviate trauma, and to give people knowledge and skills to support themselves and each other.

We will also be transforming our existing ESOL programme to embody a full range of learning activities, stepping beyond communicative English into literacy, computer skills, and accreditation. We envision people being able to use these new skills to follow pathways into education, training and employment, to have their voices heard in places of power, and to be engaged members of civic life in our community.

Finally, we are forging ahead with our commitment to opening up opportunities in our local community and beyond. We want to offer refugees a place to gain a firm foundation and to be guided towards a whole range of diverse opportunities and experiences that are open to all. We will be working collaboratively, aiming to be a bridge to wider opportunities. We want people who have been supported by CARAS to be able to seek out and take opportunities, becoming fully embedded in groups, movements and roles that are theirs by choice and which give them a sense of their own identity. We will also be constantly striving for change outside of CARAS- it will not be enough that people can access support with us; all of our activities must have a wider outcome of change, opening up access to a multitude of other services, spaces, and activities which have previously been out of reach.



## **Mission**

**To work together with asylum seekers and people of refugee background to provide practical, educational and social help. We create supportive relationships, networks and well informed services that enable people to access what they need in order to increase their wellbeing and safety.**

## **Vision**

**All who have sought refuge in the UK are welcomed, valued and supported within a community in which they can flourish.**

CARAS has become one of the largest providers of support for refugees in south London, working with some of the largest numbers of unaccompanied and separated children in the UK. We have responded to changes in demographics and are proud of our ability to remain agile.

## **Our Goals for 2019-2021:**

**OVERALL GOAL:** Create a space that is welcoming and safe for asylum seekers and refugees, providing pathways for integration into the larger communities around us. All activities will embody the key areas of social connection and friendship, confidence building, English language, opportunities for community integration and access to advice.

We will be continuing our established groups and activities, offering social activities, casework and one-to-one support, English classes and educational support. We will be adding new elements which:

1. Alleviate the emotional trauma experienced by refugees and people seeking asylum through in-house mental health services and activities, and effective referrals
2. Expand physical activities and promote good physical health for all beneficiaries
3. Build communication skills needed to thrive in the UK
4. Upgrade and expand our casework service to support more people through periods of crisis and towards independence
5. Conduct the outreach needed to reach all individuals who can benefit from being part of the CARAS community
6. Develop a robust program for the recruitment, retention and recognition of volunteers
7. Be a leader on asylum seekers and refugees, and use our collective voice (staff, volunteers, beneficiaries) and expertise to advocate for our beneficiaries.



Two themes run through each strategic goal: development of new services, and maximising evidence based communications to raise social awareness and social transformation.

We will continue to run our existing services, offering provision for English language learning, educational support, social groups and casework. Each of these will be expanded and supported through our new areas of work.

Strategic Goals	Activities and Programs
<b>1. Alleviate the emotional trauma experienced by asylum seekers and refugees by implementing in-house mental health services and activities and effective referrals</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue to run welcoming, supportive groups which ...</li> <li>• Employ a mental health professional to lead the creation of a dedicated program to address mental health needs in-house including:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ facilitated group sessions</li> <li>○ arts therapy</li> <li>○ psychoeducation</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Establish effective referrals to NHS therapeutic services</li> <li>• Certify all staff, lead volunteers, and interested beneficiaries in mental health first aid to address the needs of vulnerable beneficiaries at the time of need</li> <li>• Embed 'Five Wellbeing Essentials' across all CARAS provision (connect, be active, take notice, learn, give)</li> </ul>
<b>2. Expand physical activities and promote good physical health for all, within CARAS and the community, beneficiaries regardless of age or sex</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establish partnership with local teams, athletes and coaches to create regular sports activities at CARAS</li> <li>• Implement new physical activities for adults and young women within CARAS through taster sessions and outings</li> <li>• Establish strong relationships with external providers to ensure that refugees and asylum seekers have access to local sports provision</li> <li>• Collaborate with local clubs and organisations to help beneficiaries meet with new people, and integrate further into their new community</li> </ul>
<b>3. Build the communication skills needed to thrive in the UK</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop the quality of our ESOL programmes, expanding the training and support we are able to offer to volunteer teachers</li> <li>• Transform CARAS' existing ESOL program to one that embodies a full range of communication skills for beneficiaries with diverse backgrounds and needs, including:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ literacy classes to ensure that everyone who wants to can learn to read in English</li> <li>○ technology lab for on-going training and learning computer skills for adults</li> <li>○ accredited ESOL courses</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Create "readiness" training for further and higher education, training and job applications to help people achieve their educational and employment goals</li> <li>• Link case work to learning activities, running regular sessions on practical communication skills and literacy for day-to-day life</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establish a pathway for beneficiaries to participate in the operations and governance of CARAS</li> </ul>
<b>4. Conduct the outreach needed to attract all individuals who can benefit from being part of the CARAS community</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Target hard to reach and under-served groups, focussing specifically on men and on young people living semi-independently</li> <li>• Use strong community connections to encourage inclusion of our beneficiaries in wider activities</li> </ul>
<b>5. Upgrade and expand our casework service to support more people through periods of crisis, and towards independence</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Double the capacity of the casework team in order to have provision full time</li> <li>• Gain OISC accreditation in order to be able to offer basic immigration advice</li> <li>• Embed caseworkers in all activities to improve access to advice and swift referral</li> <li>• Expansion of one-to-work work to support those who are working towards specific goals</li> </ul>
<b>6. Develop a robust program for the recruitment and retention of a diverse team of volunteers</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hire a full time volunteer coordinator</li> <li>• Develop a holistic program that gives back to volunteers by celebrating them, and providing opportunities for training and learning</li> <li>• Implement a peer volunteer program that encourages former beneficiaries and local peers to be part of CARAS volunteer teams</li> </ul>
<b>7. Be a leader in field of asylum seekers and refugees, and use our collective voice (staff, volunteers, beneficiaries) and expertise to advocate for our beneficiaries.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implement leadership training that will enable our beneficiaries to be advocates for the services they need</li> <li>• Increase beneficiaries' confidence to share their own experiences at a range of local, regional and national levels</li> <li>• Establish partnerships between CARAS, government and other local charities that will facilitate effective communication, referrals, and allocation of resources</li> <li>• Implement a social media strategy</li> <li>• Regularly share evidence-based outward communication about the needs and experiences of beneficiaries and CARAS' impacts</li> <li>• Contribute to policy and practice which increases positive outcomes for refugees and asylum seekers</li> <li>• Develop partnerships with a range of local groups who want to increase their inclusion of local RAS populations and share learning</li> </ul>