



Impact Report 2023

Nasc,
the Irish
word for
'link',
empowers
migrants to
realise and
fulfil their
rights.

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A note from our Chairperson, Claire Cumiskey:

On behalf of the Board of Nasc, the Migrant and Refugee Rights Centre, I am privileged to present the annual report for the year 2023, a year marked by significant developments in Ireland's immigration and asylum landscape.

Against the backdrop of increasing numbers seeking safety within our borders, our charity remained steadfast in its commitment to extending support and vital services to migrants, refugees and asylum seekers who call Ireland home.

As Chairperson of the Board of Trustees, I am deeply grateful for the **unwavering dedication and tireless efforts of our remarkable staff, volunteers** and supporters who have tirelessly worked to uphold our mission and values, and have made our successes possible. Our vision of creating an **equal and inclusive Ireland** that recognises the rights of all refugees is exemplified by the collaborative efforts of our team and the unwavering support of all of our service users.

Together, we have made a **tangible difference** in the lives of those we serve, and I am immensely proud of the impact we have collectively achieved. We were delighted to see a recognition of this work by representing Cork City at the IPB Pride of Place 2023 awards.

On an international stage, it was an enormous privilege to welcome delegates from across the world to the Working Group on Resettlement in Cork and to co-chair a global gathering of refugees, refugee-led organisations, NGOs, INGOS and States at the Annual Tripartite Consultations on Resettlement in Geneva in June 2023.

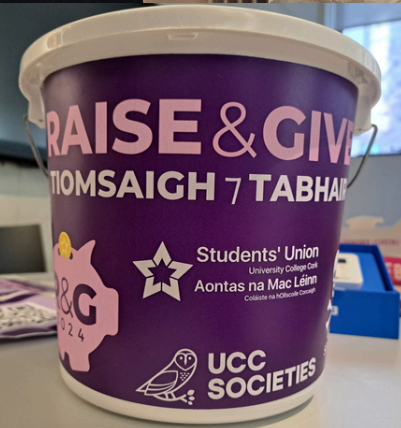
We are also very proud of the pledges we have made under the Global Compact for Refugees to support family reunification as well as the **growth of community sponsorship and education pathways** in Ireland.

I would also like to extend our deepest appreciation to our generous funders whose financial support has enabled us to continue our vital work. Through innovative programmes, **strengthened partnerships**, and **sustained advocacy** efforts, we will continue to uphold our mission and make a meaningful impact on the lives of those we serve.

As we reflect on the past year, we must also acknowledge the challenges that lie ahead. Looking forward to the coming year, Nasc is committed to meeting any obstacles and continuing to leverage opportunities so we can better serve our community.

Claire Cumiskey
Chairperson of the Board of Directors





A note from our CEO, Fiona Hurley:

Throughout 2023, Nasc faced a high demand for our services, reflecting the pressing and **complex needs** of individuals and families within our community.

The demand for our services is reflective of the high number of people who came to Ireland to seek safety as an asylum seeker, programme refugee or beneficiary of temporary protection as well as the those immigrating to Ireland for work, study or family reasons. In 2023, over 13,000 people sought asylum in Ireland while the cumulative figure of those fleeing the war in Ukraine since 2022 reached 100,000.

We are grateful to our dedicated team who have been unwavering in their **commitment and resilience** throughout the year. We also extend our heartfelt appreciation to the following staff members who left the Nasc team during the year. We wish them all the best in their future endeavours. Additionally, we would like to warmly welcome our new staff members, who have brought fresh perspectives and expertise to further strengthen our team.

Fiona Hurley
Chief Executive Officer



Key Figures:

Nationalities among service users:



64

Children provided with targeted, holistic and wraparound social work supports

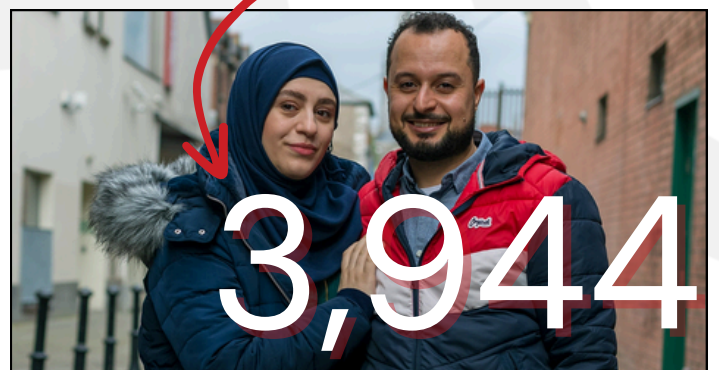


women supported by
Nasc's Women's Project

Interactions between
the Advocacy &
Information Service
and service users:

53

Children and young people supported to remain in accommodation i.e. **protected from eviction**



Young people provided with practical integration supports such as employment and education access:

169

Advocacy and Information Service

The Advocacy and Information team in 2023 consisted of Brian Collins, Natalia McDonald, Giulia Dedej (joined 31st July 2023) and Linda Pentony (departed June 2023). We'd also like to thank Phephelaphi Tshabangu and Sarah Challoner.



Brian Collins



Natalia McDonald



Giulia Dedej



Linda Petony



We would like to acknowledge and thank the following funders who made this work possible:

- the Asylum Migration and Integration Fund administered by the Department of Children, Equality, Disability and Youth,
- the National Integration Fund administered by the Department of Children, Equality, Disability and Youth,
- the SSNO administered by POBAL
- and the Health Service Executive.

We are also deeply grateful to philanthropic partners including The Ireland Funds, Tomar Trust and One Foundation.

Advocacy and Information Service

The Advocacy and Information Service had 3,944 interactions with service users throughout the year. Service users came from over 100 nationalities, further showing the diversity of migrant and refugee communities in Ireland.

Queries in relation to different types of family unity continued to be the most common query to the service, followed closely by queries relating to **citizenship** and **naturalisation**. Refugee **family reunification** was an extremely high priority for our service given the continuing instability across the globe.



The Advocacy and Information team helped to reunite refugee families from Afghanistan, Cote D'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of Congo, Eritrea, Nigeria, Sudan, Syria, Yemen and Zimbabwe.

A Department of Justice policy change in 2023, saw family reunification grants being issued to refugees who remained in direct provision or emergency accommodation. While removal of this delay was welcome, it has posed new challenges in ensuring **access to accommodation** for newly arriving families particularly given the ongoing housing shortages across Ireland.

Advocacy and Information Service

The naturalisation application process saw a number of changes in 2023, most significantly moving to an **online application process** in October 2023. While the efficiencies that should come about from online applications are to be welcomed, it has resulted in many of our service users who are not digitally literate needing additional supports in navigating the online system and uploading supporting documents. We remain conscious of how our service is essential in **bridging the digital divide** as it is likely that more immigration applications will move online in the near future.



Delays in immigration appointments with the Garda National Immigration Bureau, particularly in larger urban areas outside of Dublin, continue to have significant impacts on people's **access to employment, housing supports**, welfare supports and ability to apply for citizenship.

Finally, the Advocacy and Information Team continued to provide supports to asylum seekers whose reception needs were not being met. This includes advocacy around transfers, conditions in direct provision centres and working with homeless asylum seekers to try to secure accommodation. This issue grew to over 10% of all queries to the service in 2023.

Ukraine Response

The Ukraine Response team in 2023 consisted of Tania Baliukonis, Anna Zorenko and Dmitro Buhlak (March 2023 – August 2023). We would like to extend a special appreciation to these staff members who are Ukrainian themselves, and recognise the empathy, understanding, and resilience they bring to their work in supporting fellow Ukrainians. The team liaised closely with the Advocacy and Information team and the Women's Project and we'd like to acknowledge the contribution of Claire Mackey in particular.



Tania Baliukonis



Anna Zorenko



Claire Mackey

We would like to acknowledge and thank the following funders who made this work possible:

- Community Foundation of Ireland,
- the One Foundation,
- the Cork City Partnership,
- the Tomar Trust,
- the Health Service Executive and
- the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund administered by the Department of Children, Equality, Disability and Youth.

Ukraine Response

The Ukraine Response Team were deeply involved in addressing the ongoing challenges for those fleeing the war in Ukraine and seeking safety in Ireland. The focus of the team primarily related to Beneficiaries of Temporary Protection and encompassed providing information, guidance and support in **accessing rights and services** in Ireland.

The team works with individuals and families who have had to leave their accommodation, jobs, extended families and everything that makes a home behind but continue to be resilient in the hope for brighter days ahead.

The immediate priority for beneficiaries of temporary protection was in meeting basic needs including **reception conditions** consistent with their rights and dignity. The team carried out over 40 outreaches to accommodation centres across Cork City and County.



The Ukraine Response included a **Ukrainian language helpline** and email service. Our team responded to 439 calls and 1171 emails. Accommodation was the single biggest concern identified through the service with queries regarding education, healthcare and access to social welfare forming the majority of remaining queries.

The team provided information and **interpretation** to facilitate accommodation arrangements, including for Ukrainians moving into hosted accommodation. It has been heartening to see the generosity of individuals who continue to open their homes to those in need. Looking to the future, the team look forward to continuing to support Ukrainians in Ireland and looking at how longer-term integration needs can be met.

Children and Families: New Beginnings Project

Eilis Lee led the New Beginnings Project in 2023. Eilis is a qualified social worker. We'd like to acknowledge and thank funders including the RTÉ Toy Show Appeal fund administered by Community Foundation Ireland.



New Beginnings continued to grow and deepen its impact in the provision of **targeted, holistic and wraparound social work** supports to refugee children arriving to Ireland through refugee **family reunification** and to children and families **transitioning out of direct provision**. The project supported 64 children from 19 families. The families supported by the project came from 12 countries across the world.



Children and Families: New Beginnings Project

In March 2023, the government began the phased lifting of the ban on **rental evictions**. This had and continues to have a profound and negative impact on the children and families we work with.

Key challenges for our service users included lack of accommodation, long **waiting lists** for immigration registration, lack of access to **healthcare** and significant increases in the cost of living. Although these are larger, structural issues faced by many communities across Ireland, they can have a disproportionate impact on newly arrived families struggling to navigate **trauma, culture shock** and entirely unfamiliar bureaucratic systems.



2023 saw a significant increase in prevention of chronic poverty and deprivation work, and assistance in accessing emergency accommodation and housing supports. A key component of the work has been in facilitating access to rights and entitlements. We are grateful to services such as St Vincent de Paul and Community Connect with whom we worked closely to alleviate food and energy poverty and to support parents with newborn infants.

Other core areas of the project continued to be in supporting the longer-term education and wellbeing outcomes for children and families through support accessing schools, English language support, healthcare, therapeutic and general wellbeing supports as well as resettlement, orientation and **integration supports**. We saw an increased need for supports around the back-to-school period and in the run-up to Christmas.

Young People: Connect Project

The Connect Project included project worker Maggie Rowe and was supervised by Eilis Lee.



Maggie Rowe



Eilis Lee

We'd like to thank the following funders for their support throughout 2023:

Tusla, the International Protection Integration Fund administered by the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth, and philanthropic donors.

The Connect Project continued to grow in 2023. Thanks to funding received through the IPIF fund in 2022, the project was able to expand to include more young people in the international protection process.

In total 169 people were supported through the project to access **education and employment**, access practical integration and wellbeing supports, alleviate **poverty**, prevent homelessness and receive **English language tuition**.

Young People: Connect Project

One of the project's most important components has remained the provision of **learning supports** to encourage participation and retention in further education and/or vocational training. Access to healthcare, **mental health support**, and community integration was another common strand of work throughout the last year as we have continued to link many participants to therapeutic and wellbeing supports.



These interventions have been especially critical for the young people in the project who have experienced **trauma and loss**, including those impacted by **trafficking, torture and abuse**. Collaboration with community organisations has also been extremely important in welcoming and incorporating young migrants into the community and combating isolation.

The lifting of the eviction ban and the emerging crisis of young single male asylum seekers being left homeless together with **transfers between direct provision centres** meant that support around accommodation and **prevention of homelessness** was a major part of our work. We supported 53 children and young people to remain in accommodation in 2023.

Community Sponsorship

The Community Sponsorship Team in 2023 consisted of Majo Rivas and Stacey Dunne.



Majo Rivas



Stacey Dunne

Nasc continued to administer community sponsorship across Areas 2 (Cork, Kerry) and 5 (Waterford, Wexford, Laois, Kilkenny, Carlow). Funding for community sponsorship was provided through the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund administered by the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth.

Against the backdrop of unprecedented global crises, including a record 109 million displaced persons across the world, 2023 bore witness to an **inspiring surge of activity** in community sponsorship. It is a significant testament to the generosity and strength of the towns, villages and communities who have come together to find **safe homes for refugee families** who have fled Syria and Afghanistan.

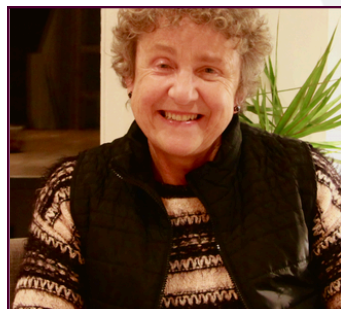
In 2023, we welcomed the Irish Refugee Protection Programme decision to formalise the Community Sponsorship Programme as a framework to support the humanitarian admission of refugee families from Afghanistan.

Community Sponsorship



Four groups across Areas 2 and 5 welcomed four families (24 individuals) in 2023. For two of these groups, who had experienced **prolonged delays in finding suitable accommodation** and being matched with a refugee family, having the families arrive to safety was a testament to their unwavering persistence, commitment, and **dedication over several years**.

We also saw **incredible community engagement** and organising from two groups formed in 2023 who welcomed Afghan refugee families. Nasc also provided support to three groups (supporting four families) who exited the programme on completion of the 18-month commitment and recruited and trained four new groups ready to sponsor refugee families in 2024.



Community Sponsorship

The Community Sponsorship team has done significant work in identifying the barriers and issues that affect groups and families and 2023 was the first full year of the Community Sponsorship team fully undertaking the initial administration tasks that are required for families to access government supports in a timely manner. This change in practice has seen marked improvement in **processing times** for families and enabled them to **access social welfare and housing supports** much sooner, alleviating stress of volunteers and families and allowing group members to dedicate their time and resources to the benefit of the family's integration.



Throughout 2023, the Community Sponsorship team proactively engaged with Community Sponsorship policy development and participated in events held by the CAPS-EU project, the Working Group on Resettlement and the GRSI Global Gathering 2023.

Complementary Pathways

The Complementary Pathways Team in 2023 consisted of Tessa Cornally and Nael Saoud (departed 24th November 2023).



Tessa Cornally



Nael Saoud

Funding for Complementary Pathways was provided through the EU Passworld Project funded through the EU Commission Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund.

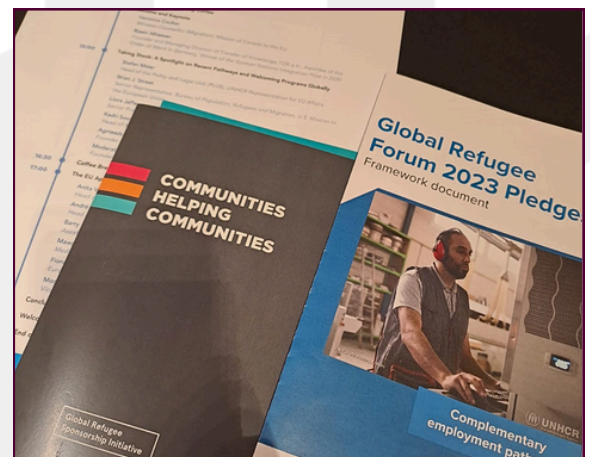
2023 marked the second year of a three-year EU project with the goal of creating education and employment pathways supported by community sponsorship. Nasc and UNHCR, as Irish implementing partners, were delighted to see the establishment of the first community sponsorship group established to support higher education pathways and the first two scholarship places at the **College of Science and Engineering at the University of Galway**. The first two refugee students arrived to Galway in August 2023 for the 2023/2024 academic year.

Significant work was also carried out to recruit other universities to the EU-Passworld Project. Bilateral meetings were held with seven universities and two new universities committed to offering scholarship places for the 2024/2025 year.

Complementary Pathways

Advancement on labour pathways continued to be much slower. Nasc and UNHCR conducted outreach with seven employers and one Business Interest Group and publicised the programme at an Engineers Ireland regional networking event and a Cork Jobs expo. Although no employers signed up to recruiting an employee through the programme, work continued on developing a **bespoke training Welcome at Work** for the provision of integration and orientation supports for refugee employees arriving under the employment pathway.

Nasc was delighted to coordinate an EU-Passworld partners' meeting and field trip to Dublin and Galway in May 2023 where we welcomed partners from Belgium and Italy and guests from across Ireland and Europe.



Nasc presented our complementary pathways work at the Working Group on Resettlement in Cork in February 2023 and the Global Refugee Sponsorship Initiative event in Brussels in October 2023. We were also pleased to assist with the organisation of an EU-Passworld meeting on the sides of the Annual Tripartite Consultations on Resettlement in June 2023.

Complementary Pathways

For the first time, Ireland held the chair of the ATCR for a one-year cycle between June 2022 and June 2023 and Nasc held the NGO co-chair position.

Sinead MacArtain was the lead Policy Officer on the project and was assisted by Mary Ni Leime (January 2023 – February 2023) and Ann Marie O’ Brien (March 2023 – July 2023).



Sinead MacArtain

We would like to acknowledge and thank the Irish Refugee Protection Programme (IRPP) in the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth and the UNHCR for their support.



As ATCR 2023 co-chairs, Nasc and the IRPP choose the theme of “Learning in Crisis: Building Solutions Together”. One of the priorities for Ireland’s year as chairing was to showcase the contribution of smaller, resettlement countries and to encourage the expansion of resettlement and complementary pathway programmes. Nasc role included regular liaison with the global NGO and INGO community working on resettlement and complementary pathways.



Complementary Pathways

Within the framework of the cycle, there were two key multi-day events – the **Working Group on Resettlement (WGR)** which was held in Cork City from 28th February to 2nd March and the **Annual Tripartite on Consultations on Resettlement** which was held in Geneva from 26th June to 28th June. Nasc worked closely with partners – the IRPP, the Refugee Advisory Group and UNHCR in the development of agendas, site visits and recruitment of speakers.



The WGR featured 35 speakers and moderators on diverse topics addressing resettlement, complementary pathways, integration and mental health and organised site visits to three locations across Cork and Kerry for the 69 participants. After the event ended, Nasc drafted a report for distribution across the global ATCR community.

The ATCR Geneva event was significantly larger with an attendance of 247 participants including refugee leaders and advocates, NGO and INGO representatives, key officials from States and interested researchers and private sector organisations. Nasc CEO, Fiona Hurley, presented an NGO Statement advocating global policy objectives for the expansion of resettlement and complementary pathways to an audience including UN High Commissioner for Refugees Filippo Grandi.

Women's Project

Kiren Khalid took over as coordinator of the Women's Project in 2023 following the departure of Claire Mackey.



Kiren Khalid



Claire Mackey

We'd like to thank all of the volunteers, facilitators and teachers who were part of delivering programmes under the Women's Project in 2023. We'd also like to provide a special thank you to our fellow charities in Cork who made space available for us to carry out this important work with a particular mention to Cork Volunteer Centre and Cork Penny Dinners. Thank you to our funders, including:

Cork City Partnership,

The Community Foundation,

the Health Service Executive,

St Stephens Green Trust,

Cork Education and Training Board,

Bank of Ireland Begin Together Fund,

the REACH fund,

philanthropic and private donors.

Women's Project

Over 160 women from 18 countries across the world were supported by Nasc's Women's Project in 2023.



The project continued to provide a **shared community space** for women who have experienced forced displacement and offer a variety of classes and services to meet their needs. We were pleased to be able to sustain regular drop-in days with creative classes to encourage women to engage with the programme, gain new skills and confidence speaking English.

55 women enrolled in our regular English language classes at 4 levels, both online and in-person. An additional 80 women, Ukrainian Beneficiaries of Temporary Protection, successfully completed **Beginners' English classes** and/or wellbeing classes. This project included onsite (in accommodation centres) English language classes and we're grateful to the centres who provided space and facilitated access for our English teachers.



Women's Project

The Women's Project developed a new course in 2023 targeted at meeting the changing needs of women in light of the changing economic climate and growing affordability issues. We engaged an experienced facilitator to create a bespoke programme to help migrant and refugee women gain a better understanding of their own finances and moving towards **financial independence**.



Feedback from the project showed a high level of interest amongst participants in **self-employment and entrepreneurship** and we were delighted to successfully obtain further funding to develop a course to promote this entrepreneurial interest.



Women's Project

Multi-annual St Stephen's Green Trust funding has allowed Nasc to create a **Women's Empowerment Group** for women in the international protection system. The project is designed to bring to the fore voices that are not always heard. 12 women were recruited to the project in quarters 2 and 3 of 2023 and began focus on **access to rights** and looking ahead to 2024's **local elections**.



Finally, 2023 ended on a high note with a very successful cooking session designed to allow women in accommodation settings with no **access to cooking facilities** to come together in a professional kitchen to gain **HAACP qualifications**, learn new recipes from each other and **discover each other's cultures** through food and cooking.



Policy & Communications

The Policy and Communications work of Nasc in 2023 was led by Olivia Teahan. She worked closely with the CEO, Fiona Hurley and collaborated with all of the teams in the organisation.



This collaboration ensured that the important work happening across the Nasc projects was highlighted accurately in **local, national and social media**, and that Nasc's policy initiatives were informed by the feedback of service users.

This work could not have happened without the support of funders – One Foundation, Community Foundation Ireland, EU-Passworld and the SSNO administered by Pobal.

Under the funding of the One Foundation and Community Foundation Ireland, Nasc's Communications project supported the Ukraine Response Team in their Public Relations. This included the organisation of **community events** and **public announcements** regarding Beneficiaries of Temporary Protection.



Policy & Communications

As part of Nasc's role in the EU-Passworld project, events were co-organised and/or publicised by the Communications Manager to promote **Education Pathways** in Ireland.

Nasc's Communications work also contributed to the development of the **Community Sponsorship Ireland programme**, of which Nasc is a Regional Support Organisation.

Policy initiatives in 2023 included the **STAD coalition (Standing Together Against Direct Provision)** and the CAHC (Coalition Against Hate Crime):

STAD was co-founded by Nasc and seven other migrant and refugee rights organisations in Ireland in 2022. The political and social climate in which the STAD coalition was launched had changed significantly by early 2023. Nasc has led the coalition in re-framing its priorities, and in holding the government to account on their commitments, including the publication of the new White Paper and the provision of a clear timeline for the establishment of a human rights compliant alternative to the Direct Provision system. Nasc published its research report, *Ending Direct Provision? February 2021–September 2022: A review of the implementation of the White Paper on Ending Direct Provision in 2023*. This research was funded by the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission's Human Rights and Equality (IHREC) Grant Scheme 2021–2022.



Policy & Communications

Nasc is also a founding organisation of the **Coalition Against Hate Crime Ireland (CAHC)**. This coalition is led by the Irish Council for Civil Liberties (ICCL), and its members represent groups that are commonly targeted in hate crimes. Advocacy on hate crime legislation, specifically the enactment of the Criminal Justice (Incitement to Violence or Hatred and Hate Offences) Bill 2022, was ongoing throughout 2023. Public commentary and misinformation including from prominent political representatives, has likely contributed to delays in the enactment of the Bill. However the extreme anti-immigrant sentiment publicised during and after the Dublin Riots in November 2023 further highlighted the need for legislative action, and the Coalition hopes to see the Bill enacted in mid-2024.



Thank you to our funders for making this work possible:

