

Refugee Legal Support Strategic Framework 2026-2028



Refugee
Legal
Support

Contents

1	Our Values	3
2	Our Vision	4
3	Our Mission Statement	5
4	Strategic Plan 2026–2028	6
	Objective 1: Embed community focus and meaningful refugee participation	6
	Objective 2: Sustainably grow high quality legal casework across all offices	7
	Objective 3: Strengthen cross border connectedness and integration	8
	Objective 4: Build organisational and financial resilience	9

Our Values

These are the core principles of RLS. They guide decision making. They help us determine not only what work we do and why, but also how we work together to do it. We may not yet always fulfil all our values, but we aim to.

1

We believe that the lack of available financial resources should not hinder access to justice. **High quality legal assistance** and representation should be **available to all who need it**, free of charge and regardless of immigration status. Pro bono legal services are valuable but should complement, not replace or undermine publicly funded legal aid services.

2

We are **anti racist** and **denounce all forms of oppression**. We stand\ opposed to entrenched inequalities, racism and all forms of oppression. We recognise that these inequalities are often the root causes of migration.

3

We **work in solidarity with those who migrate** and those who support them. We work with people, not for them. We **stand alongside** and respect the inherent dignity and humanity of people who migrate. We listen and are guided by the people we work with.

4

We are **specialised** and **use our expertise for strategic impact**. We are respected for our specialist knowledge. We aim for precision and accuracy in all our work. In a fast-changing environment we use our experience and expertise to meet urgent needs while also thinking beyond the immediate context to push for positive systemic change.

5

We respect and **support the wellbeing** and expertise of our colleagues. Our colleagues should play a central role in shaping our work and how we respond to need. We enable each other to fulfil our individual and collective potential in a work **environment of mutual trust and respect**

6

We are proud to be **independent**. We are fearless. We are committed to what we do and direct in what we say. We are not afraid to try something new and to **break new ground**.



Our Vision

- People are prioritised above borders and **safe routes of migration** are accessible for all who need them.
- **Laws and policies** protecting the rights of people who migrate are **upheld, properly implemented and respected**.
- Immigration systems are **fair, accessible and transparent**.
- People who migrate can **exercise their rights** and can access free, high quality and **effective legal support** where needed.
- Diversity is celebrated. The **public welcomes refugees and migrants** and supports their rights.
- Racism ends. Institutions and societies are **decolonised**.
- People who migrate can live in **safe and dignified conditions** without the threat of detention.

Our Mission Statement

Refugee Legal Support works in solidarity with people who migrate. We advocate for the promotion and protection of people's rights throughout the migration process.

We advance safe migration through community-based legal work, legal support, case-work, strategic litigation, outreach, training and partnerships. Our work is informed by those with lived experience of migration.

We support the global movement that challenges entrenched inequalities, racism and discrimination. We recognise that immigration systems are weighted against those who are forced to migrate. We stand in opposition to hostile policies and all forms of violence against people compelled to migrate.



Strategic Plan 2026–2028

Objective 1:

Embed community focus and meaningful refugee participation

CONTEXT: RLS has a long-standing commitment to working in solidarity with people who migrate and to ensuring that our work is informed by lived experience.

We recognise that there is more to do to ensure that people with lived experience play a meaningful role in shaping RLS, including our strategic direction, governance and decision making. Embedding refugee participation in a more structured and intentional way is necessary to strengthen accountability and legitimacy. Building on our existing community engagement, we will ensure that community voices guide and influence everything we do.

Key Results	Key Activities
People with lived experience of migration are represented in RLS governance and have structured opportunities to shape organisational strategy and priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">a) Develop and implement a UK refugee participation framework.b) Recruit and support trustees and staff with lived experience.c) Embed lived experience input into annual reviews.
RLS has established regular mechanisms through which community priorities inform decisions on casework focus, outreach and advocacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none">a) Review and strengthen RLS's monitoring and evaluation framework to improve how and when direct client and community feedback is gathered, analysed and used.b) Establish regular, facilitated opportunities to spend time with communities, such as community listening sessions, focus groups or roundtables, co-designed with community partners.c) Develop clear processes for communicating back to communities how their input has influenced RLS's work.
During the strategy period, RLS increases access to clear and accessible legal information for communities facing barriers to formal legal advice	<ul style="list-style-type: none">a) Develop and deliver legal information through a range of channels, informed by community preferences, including in-person sessions and appropriate digital platforms.

Objective 2: Sustainably grow high quality legal casework across all offices

CONTEXT: The legal and political environment in which RLS operates is becoming increasingly restrictive. Governments in the UK and Greece are narrowing access to legal routes, while border securitisation continues to intensify across Europe. In the UK, despite some limited improvements to legal aid, there remains an acute access to justice crisis, with more than half of people seeking asylum unable to secure an immigration lawyer. In Greece, cuts to funding have significantly reduced the availability of free legal services for asylum seekers and refugees and NGOs are increasingly targeted and criminalised by the government.

Against this backdrop, demand for high quality legal support continues to grow. Over the last three years, RLS has steadily built strong and experienced casework teams in both the UK and Greece. This places us in a solid position to expand our impact while maintaining quality. During this strategy period, our core casework focus will be on asylum, family reunion and supporting people who have been criminalised¹, alongside a growing focus on people displaced in the context of climate change. These focus areas will guide our work across jurisdictions and inform decisions about growth, expertise and capacity.

Key Results	Key Activities
RLS increases its capacity to deliver high quality legal casework while maintaining supervision, standards and staff wellbeing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Expand casework capacity in line with strategic focus areas b) Expand and improve supervision capacity within the team including through internal training and hiring new supervisors where possible c) Legal aid billing is increased by 10-15% each billing year
RLS's core areas of legal specialism are clearly defined and consistently delivered across offices, informed by shared standards and expertise	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Ensure staff have access to specialist training aligned with our priority areas. b) Create structured opportunities for internal knowledge-sharing.
RLS has systems in place that support consistent, effective and fair intake, triage and case management across offices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Improve and develop an efficient and strategic client intake process across projects in the UK and Greece b) All staff are trained and supported to use Clio and other relevant systems effectively
Access to justice is improved for people facing barriers to legal support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Strengthen partnerships with the immigration/asylum legal support and advice sector and pro bono partners b) Maintain clear referral pathways to ensure people are supported to access legal help even where RLS cannot act directly

1. For the purposes of this strategy, criminalisation refers to a situation where migration/seeking asylum has been rendered a criminal act/s, and so those exercising their rights to seek asylum are met with prosecution etc. (threatened or otherwise).

Objective 3: Strengthen cross border connectedness and integration

CONTEXT: RLS is one of a small number of organisations with an operational presence across key stages of the migration journey, working in Greece, Northern France and the UK. This cross-border model is a core strength of our organisation and enables us to support people at different points in their journey, as well as to develop a deeper understanding of how policies and practices interact across jurisdictions.

As our organisation has grown, it has become more challenging to ensure that staff across different locations remain connected to one another and have a clear understanding of work taking place in other offices. At the same time, there are important opportunities to learn from casework approaches and advocacy strategies across jurisdictions. We also recognise the value of working collaboratively with other organisations engaged in cross-border work, in order to share learning, align approaches where appropriate, and strengthen collective impact.

Strengthening cross border connectedness is therefore essential to ensure coherence in our work, to support staff, and to maximise the impact of our expertise across borders.

Key Results	Key Activities
Staff across all offices have a clear and shared understanding of RLS's work, priorities and approaches across jurisdictions	a) Hold regular cross office meetings and thematic sessions
RLS has developed and embedded shared approaches to core areas of casework and strategic work across offices, while remaining responsive to local legal and political contexts.	a) Develop shared internal best practice guidance and resources for key thematic areas, such as asylum, criminalization and climate displacement
Opportunities for joint learning, peer support and collaboration across offices increase and are embedded in organisational practice	a) Convene an annual in person gathering b) Create structured opportunities for joint case discussions and peer learning
RLS strengthens collaborative relationships with other organisations working across borders in order to share learning, align approaches where appropriate, and enhance collective impact.	a) Build and maintain strategic relationships with organisations engaged in cross-border work, including through joint learning opportunities, information sharing and collaboration on shared challenges where appropriate.

Objective 4: Build organisational and financial resilience

CONTEXT: To deliver our mission over the long term, RLS must be both financially resilient and internally strong. The funding environment for migrant justice organisations remains volatile, and reliance on limited income streams presents a risk to sustainability. At the same time, the nature of our work is demanding, and sustaining impact requires ongoing investment in people, systems and organisational culture.

RLS is proud of the work it delivers and of the commitment and expertise of its staff and trustees. As we seek to expand our impact, we are equally committed to doing so in a way that is sustainable and that protects the wellbeing of our team. Building organisational and financial resilience during this strategy period will ensure that RLS remains a place where people feel valued and supported, and where we can continue to deliver high quality work with integrity and independence.

Key Results	Key Activities
RLS has strengthened its financial resilience by increasing the proportion of diversified and unrestricted income	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Diversify income through a balanced mix of trusts and foundations, individual giving, corporate partnerships and legal aid income b) Invest in fundraising capacity and systems to support long-term income generation
RLS maintains a working environment in which staff feel supported, valued and able to sustain their work.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Invest in supervision structures, wellbeing support and reflective practice b) Ensure workloads are monitored to reduce the risk of burnout and vicarious trauma c) Review people policies regularly to ensure they support equity, inclusion and wellbeing
RLS has governance and leadership structures that are fit for purpose	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Undertake targeted trustee recruitment to address skills, experience and lived-experience gaps b) Provide ongoing support to trustees to enable effective oversight c) Undertake governance review to ensure leadership and organizational structure is fit for purpose



Refugee
Legal
Support