

Durham City of Sanctuary

Annual Report 2020

Durham City of Sanctuary, a member of the national Cities of Sanctuary, came into being in response to the decision by Durham County Council to participate in the government-funded scheme to receive and support a number of Syrian refugees in the region. Durham City of Sanctuary has now completed its second year as a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO). In common with other third sector organisations, Covid-19 and its recent variants have made this an exceptionally challenging year for us. However, the regional groups established by the national City of Sanctuary movement have been a welcome source of spaces to exchange ideas and online resources and share concerns, with all groups feeling the loss of face to face very powerfully. One volunteer had carried out all the groundwork for a bespoke project to support refugees struggling with reading English, with a safe location secured, a reading scheme purchased by DCoS and volunteers recruited, but this had to be postponed due to successive layers of Covid restrictions. A bid for a follow-up to the successful Digital Stories project was not funded, but we will submit further bids.

Those regional CoS groups that attempted online activities have had very mixed results, often poor uptake and participation, even where equipment and funding for broadband or data on phones were covered. Some have found that circulating interesting online opportunities run by others has helped. All agree that drop-ins and language learning have not worked online. One of our volunteers joined a national organisation that specializes in one to one online befriending, which she felt was mutually beneficial, but with some issues that need to be ironed out. We are looking into how we might set up and manage something similar in our groups, in preparation for the likelihood of continuing, or intermittent, restrictions on face to face contact. In the longer term, we hope to create some ongoing online activity as a complement to face to face activities, but there is an overwhelming consensus that refugee families and volunteers alike miss live human contact above all else.

Local groups have sustained contact through Whatsapp and the more settled communities continue to reach out to more recent arrivals. Language acquisition or progress towards fluency continues to be a struggle for some, employability is still a major priority, although there are some success stories and the entrepreneurial spirit so many possess manifested in a tailor making masks with a charity, a valuable experience which we hope to translate into a business opportunity. We have

initiated an enterprise network, led by a local contact and hope to make progress despite lockdown.

We have also successfully raised funds for a range of requests, including a small, socially distanced wedding reception, sewing machines (initially for a course, now retained by the women who took part to meet family needs and maintain their skills for an enterprise project when circumstances permit, recycled bicycles and a range of basic items for a group of asylum seekers living in very harsh circumstances. A Christmas present project in collaboration with students and staff of St. Aidan's College (Durham University), provided presents to all the children and young people across all the existing groups, over 160 in total. All of these projects have brought very welcome positive feedback and demonstrated that we can make a difference even in lockdown conditions.

Wellbeing and mental health provision have understandably been of even greater concern, but in the absence of bilingual practitioners, governmental, NHS and ngo partners are still seeking more effective and long-term solutions. We have agreed to participate in a local project to research our refugee groups' experiences of accessing NHS provision, which we hope will inform policy and practice. One group has benefited from the voluntary support of a qualified bilingual practitioner.

We also need to look for sources of wellbeing support for our volunteers, who often find that refugees confide distressing memories to them or ask them to mediate or intervene in requests to statutory bodies. While the training we provided before lockdown is welcome, there are still areas we need to address.

As I write, we have just learned that a further group of families will be coming to Durham under the renewed government scheme. While we cannot replicate every facet of our usual welcome, we will provide gift bags and given the strictures of lockdown and the family compositions are raising funds to buy televisions and licences for each family, which cannot be provided by DCC under the terms set by the government.

Our Objects:

To advance education, relieve financial hardship and distress amongst asylum-seekers and those granted refugee status in Durham, and to educate the public about the issues relating to refugees and asylum-seekers, in particular but not exclusively by:

a) Promoting the inclusion, integration and welfare of refugees and asylum-seekers, by encouraging a public commitment to becoming a place of welcome and safety through the provision of information, advice and support as shall be thought fit;

- b) Encouraging, supporting and liaising with Durham County Council, other service providers, local communities and voluntary, community and faith organisations in welcoming and assisting refugees and asylum-seekers; and
- c) Providing accurate and up to date information to the local community on the situation of local refugees and asylum seekers and to publicise and celebrate their contribution to their local communities, and to UK society and culture, and to challenge hostility and discrimination against them.

Objects (a), (b) and (c) have been addressed significantly, in part through building a positive, enduring relationship with DCC and with key voluntary groups who have also committed their support to refugees in the region.

Objects (a) and (c) are most developed in the areas of supplementing Council support and information for the refugees themselves, both directly and through signposting, including to faith and wider cultural communities. The goal of helping to build a culture of welcome in the region is ongoing, including promoting events run by DCoS and others which aim to de-mythify and de-stigmatize, and/or celebrate the rich cultural contribution of, asylum seekers and refugees in the region. In most locations, refugees have now made contacts and friendships which embed them in their new homes.

Wherever possible, refugees with whom we are working participate voluntarily in the organisation and delivery of events and speak from their own experience, directly or with the aid of interpreters.

We continue to enjoy a broad based membership and wider support, including entrepreneurs, community groups, University staff and students, writers, artists, and individual residents from a number of different towns and villages. Durham County is geographically broad and population widely dispersed, so continuing to build engagement is important to us.

Object (b) has been achieved through careful relationship-building and key contributions from our Muslim members, but also thanks to the goodwill of the DCC team, faith organisations and voluntary organisations such as the Durham Diverse Women's Network.

Future Planning:

1. Continue to build our membership across the County to encourage local initiatives around building a culture of welcome and help to prepare a positive community reception for new arrivals and others.
2. Extend and develop the volunteer training, embedding wherever possible the suggestions from the first cohort of volunteers.
3. Develop the range of cultural and social activities and trips once Covid restrictions diminish.
4. Evaluate existing projects and scope new ones.
5. Undertake a second mapping exercise of refugee skills and goals, to help focus our activities. (Interface with Enterprise Network)

SFF 02/02/2021

Durham City of Sanctuary

Income and Expenditure for the year ended 30 April 2020

Balance at Bank as at 1 May 2019		20382
Subscriptions and Donations		<u>16592</u>
		36974
Expenditure		
Transport and Travelling Expenses	3136	
Volunteer Passport training	1219	
Xmas Party and Gift Bags	450	
Rents	1856	
Accountants Fees	25	
Conversation Group Supplies	236	
Insurance	228	
DBS Checks	90	
Bank Charges	15	
Fundraising costs	216	
Targeted fundraising - Al Dalati	1000	
Targeted fundraising - Al Hassoun	2466	
Sewing machines for training	264	
Festival of Light donation	1000	
Reading Buddy Scheme resources	708	
DCC Waste collection	26	
Balance at Bank as at 30 April 2020	<u>24055</u>	<u>36974</u>

The above Income and Expenditure Account has been prepared and audited from the accounting records and represents a true and fair view of the financial position of the Charity for the year ended 30 April 2020.

James Connolly

**James Connolly
Accountants and Tax Advisors**

Durham City of Sanctuary Statement of Financial Activity, April 2020

	Unrestricted funds (UF)	Restricted Funds (RF)	Endowment Funds	Total Fund
	£	£	£	£
Income & Endowments:				
Donations (UF: subs & donations)(RF: DCC grants for conversation classes, transport & ESOL overh	9665.73	10500.00	0.00	20165.73
earned from charitable activities	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
earned from other activities (fashion show, Syrian evening, concert)	3889.00	0.00	0.00	3889.00
investment & other income	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
total	13554.73	10500.00	0.00	24054.73
Expenditure:				
cost of raising funds	216.00	0.00	0.00	216.00
expenditure on charitable activity (UF: cultural visits, gifts)(RF: conversation class supplies, transpo	5206.00	7194.60	0.00	12400.60
other expenditure (DBS checks, insurance)	318.48	0.00	0.00	318.48
total	5740.48	7194.60	0.00	12935.08
Net incoming resources before investment gains	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Net gains / losses on investments	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Net incoming resources	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Transfer between funds				
(15% of UF for long term expenditure in agreement with Trustees decision)	2033.21	0.00	0.00	2033.21
Other recognised gains / losses	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Gains / losses on revaluations of fixed assets	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Other gains	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Reconciliation of funds	5781.04	3305.40	0.00	9086.44
Totals brought forward	135.02	13805.29	0.00	13940.31
Totals carried forward	5916.06	17110.69	0.00	23026.75