

Durham City of Sanctuary

Annual Report 2021

Durham City of Sanctuary, a member of the national Cities of Sanctuary movement, 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 fourth year as a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO). In common with other third sector organisations, the ongoing evolution of Covid-19 continues to bring significant challenges. Nonetheless, we have sustained some key activities, initiated new ones and contributed initial support to welcoming recent arrivals of refugees from Afghanistan. The regional groups established by the national City of Sanctuary movement continue to be an invaluable source of online resources, including workshops to exchange practice and monitor the needs of refugees and asylum seekers through Covid.

The reopening of drop-ins from September 2021 has been welcomed by both refugees and volunteers, demonstrating the value of these particular face- to- face forums. At meetings, the most popular requests received for future activities when ftf is easier to arrange on a larger scale, include: resuming the Taste of Syria cultural exchange and fundraising events (and related events for our Iraqi and recent Afghan families); organised trips – for which we have ring-fenced funding in our accounts; new projects based around music, performance or creative writing, which people envisage as face to face rather than online; one to one tutoring in subjects like Maths and English; work experience, internships and sponsoring fees, transport costs and sundry needs for professional qualifications. Young people have taken up fitness opportunities we have funded (gym membership; karate clubs), but still express a strong desire for safe youth club spaces and workshops on sex and relationship education. Broader forms of cultural awareness and exchange are also cited, often by older refugees.

Our first cohort has now completed five years residence and received support from the DCC in applying for indefinite leave to remain. Some have established their own businesses, others are studying for degrees or professional qualifications. However, despite

the excellent efforts of the DCC funded post to support these areas, the need for more opportunities to explore employment paths, refresh existing skills and acquire new ones, find work experience/internships is pressing and will be a focus for our Enterprise contacts this year. The levels of fluency required in written and spoken English continue to be obstacles for some people, particularly the over 40s. While online support and activity is appreciated, all parties echoed what we found last year: refugee families and volunteers alike miss direct human contact above all else.

The use of Whatsapp groups of volunteers and refugees and the provision of informal support and advice from more settled communities to new arrivals have proved even more crucial during the pandemic. We have been able to facilitate recruitment of refugees to a healthcare project aimed at understanding the experience of successive cohorts in engaging with NHS provision, and we hope that some of the ongoing concerns we have about mental health provision will emerge from this and will provide a robust evidence base to bid for funding for specialized trauma-informed support/training, recruiting people fluent in Arabic. We will continue to represent these needs at regional and national Forums, and nominate refugee Trustees and other refugee volunteers to be our spokespersons or co-attendees. Offering leadership opportunities, for example by supporting a new iteration of the very successful Sanctuary in Politics mentoring initiative, (when Covid permits again) is one of our development goals for 2022.

We have continued to successfully raise funds for a range of requests, including fees for professional qualifications, contributions to the generous scheme set up by local charity, Recycle y' Bike (refurbished bicycles), smart TVs and the first year's licence fee for new arrivals (key to both language learning and cultural learning); PE equipment and other essentials for schoolchildren. We have also held a series of successful fundraisers and clothing collections for regional groups that support asylum seekers, whose living conditions continue to be very harsh, while recent legislation has further complicated their circumstances. Some groups have supported families now applying for indefinite right to remain with study for the Citizenship test. Students of Durham University have supported the annual Christmas present project providing gifts/gift vouchers to all the new arrivals from the past eighteen months,

including recent Afghan arrivals; providing volunteers for a kids club at the Durham drop-in; fundraising for us. Students and local volunteers have also provided one to one tuition in a number of subjects but we have moved to funding some professional online tutoring at the request of refugees. Refugees would prefer to be tutored by subject specialist teachers where possible.

Volunteers have also liaised with two drop-in groups in Sunderland, mainly helping asylum seekers; PACT House community centre, Stanley, which has provided food for asylum seekers and refugees and some household items (eg cooker and a fridge) plus transport for large items of furniture; Gilesgate WellBeing Group and Durham Food Bank, who have donated goods and found a qualified PAT tester for donated items; St Cuthbert's Church Community in Crook, which is supporting recent arrivals to County Durham. They have also liaised with EMTAS regarding the needs of children being educated in County Durham schools; organised transport to take donated items to asylum seekers; organised and financed family outings to South Shields and Flamingoland; visited vulnerable single-parent refugee families in Stanley, Chester le Street and Peterlee; helped refugees to practise for the theory section of their driving tests;

Offers from new volunteers have been welcome, but establishing, coordinating and overseeing many of these activities, across a broad geographical area, depends on a small number of very dedicated, longstanding, volunteers who carry significant responsibility. We have passed the first stage of a funding bid to the Sir James Knott Trust, to part-fund a volunteer coordinator, to work in recruitment, training and support for our volunteers. If successful, this will be transformative and enable us to extend and consolidate activity, while distributing volunteer work and responsibility more widely. We have also set ourselves the goal of finding a qualified, source of wellbeing support for our volunteers, who continue to find themselves at times in situations they cannot resolve, for example where there is clear distress confided to them, but no Arabic-speaking source of qualified support to whom people can be referred. The key workers, employment service and other support provided by DCC have been extended beyond the original timelines very helpfully, for specific cases, but otherwise must taper off to transfer resources to new arrivals.

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 and asylum seekers 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. We hope to influence Durham's bid for City of Culture, by integrating a range of cultural projects highlighting the diversity brought by our refugee communities, their resilience and entrepreneurial spirit.

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. Consolidate and expand our volunteer base while continuing to build all forms of membership and support, across the County, to encourage local initiatives around building a culture of welcome. Continue to help to prepare a positive community reception for new arrivals and others.
2. Continue our funding bids for a volunteer coordinator as a major priority and, if successful, move to appointment as swiftly as possible.
3. Extend and develop volunteer training and support, embedding wherever possible suggestions from experienced volunteers.
4. Develop the range of cultural and social activities and trips, as and when Covid restrictions permit.
5. Scope new cultural projects, in collaboration with local practitioners and charities.
6. Undertake a second mapping exercise of refugee skills and goals, to help focus our activities. (Interface with Enterprise Network)

SFF 07/01/2021

Durham City of Sanctuary Statement of Financial Activity, April 2021

	Unrestricted funds (UF)	Restricted Funds (RF)	Endowment Funds	Total Fund
	£	£	£	£
Income & Endowments:				
Donations (UF: subs & donations)(RF: NERS targeted fundraising campaign)	4468.30	3080.66	0.00	7548.96
earned from charitable activities	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
earned from other activities (Durham Uni Halloween event)	300.00	0.00	0.00	300.00
investment & other income	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
total	4768.30	3080.66	0.00	7848.96
Expenditure:				
cost of raising funds (JustGiving fee)	216.00	0.00	0.00	216.00
expenditure on charitable activity (UF: TV licences, gifts, educational supplies)(RF: conversation cla	6787.00	4251.00	0.00	11038.00
other expenditure (DBS checks, insurance, accountant)	278.00	0.00	0.00	278.00
total	7281.00	4251.00	0.00	11532.00
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)	670.25	0.00	0.00	670.25
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	-3182.95	-1170.34	0.00	-4353.29
Totals brought forward	5916.06	17110.69	0.00	23026.75
Totals carried forward	2733.11	15940.35	0.00	18673.46

Durham City of Sanctuary

Income and Expenditure for the year ended 30 April 2021

Balance at Bank as at 1 May 2020	22995
Subscriptions and Donations	4110
HMRC Gift Aid Reclaimed	<u>2126</u>

29231

Note: The charity also received donations in gifts and vouchers that amounted to 1612

Expenditure

School Uniforms and vouchers	3898	
Transport and Travelling Expenses	98	
TV Licences	1586	
NERS JG Campaign	3000	
Rents	30	
Accountants Fees	25	
Education Course IM	1195	
Insurance	243	
Bank Charges	10	
Charge for Just Giving Account	216	
Donation for Al Dalati	1123	
Sundry Expenditure	108	
Balance at Bank as at 30 April 2021	<u>17699</u>	<u>29231</u>