

Durham City of Sanctuary

Annual Report 2022

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 resettlement scheme to receive and support Syrian refugees in the region. Durham City of Sanctuary has now completed its fifth year as a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO). In common with other third sector organisations, the changing environment for seekers of asylum, in terms of both local policy and global crisis, has brought new challenges this year. Covid also continues to affect people and place strain on local services. So, I start by expressing profound gratitude to our volunteers, fellow Trustees and partnership organisations for renewing so many activities while responding to the arrival of refugees from Afghanistan and Ukraine. The regional networks run by the national City of Sanctuary movement and the work of countywide bodies like the Durham Community Foundation continue to be invaluable sources of spaces to exchange information and good practice; create valuable online resources, including safeguarding and other key training modules; and flag changes in both government policy and the Charity Commission requirements for charitable organisations.

Current Activities:

There are now four drop-ins across the county, including one specifically for the Ukrainian community. Social prescribing link workers now arrange visits to the drop-ins, as do the Covid resilience NHS team. Groups in several locations have successfully organized Taste of Syria cultural exchange and fundraising events and trips (eg Auckland Project, Durham City and cathedral, Lightwater Valley, Keswick, with a trip to London planned forthcoming) which we can support/co-fund through ring-fenced funding in our accounts; Eid celebrations; Christmas parties; there is a Trustee representative on the working group for a County initiative to establish Schools of Sanctuary across the region; one to one tutoring in subjects like Maths and English; work experience, internships and sponsoring of fees, transport costs and sundry needs for the pursuit of 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 still viewed as gaps, often by older refugees.

We have continued to successfully raise funds for a range of emergency requests, following bereavements or other unexpected events, contributions to the generous scheme by local charity, Recyke y' Bike (refurbished bicycles), PE equipment, school uniform and other essentials for schoolchildren. Smart TVs are an essential for language consolidation and cultural access, so we continue to fund those for new arrivals and the first year of the license fee. Volunteers have also collected clothing and a range of basic household items for asylum seekers and we now rent a storage facility to support this and pay delivery costs for furniture and other large items. Volunteers have supported families now applying for indefinite right to remain to study for the Citizenship test. Students and local volunteers have also provided one to one tuition in a number of subjects, but we continue to fund some professional online tutoring at the request of refugees. Refugees would prefer to be tutored by subject specialist teachers where possible and schools do not all have sufficient capacity under the government post-Covid tutoring scheme.

Student groups from Durham University have been hugely supportive in other ways, too, both with fundraising (a total of £33,487 over eighteen months, all banked in 2022) and their committed and creative support of Kids Clubs at Drop-ins.

Some volunteers have supported refugees one to one in preparation for UK driving licences.

The success of the Syrian resettlement scheme can be seen in our second cohort to have completed five years residence, who are receiving support from DCC in applying for indefinite leave to remain. As with our first cohort, there is much to celebrate in their resilience and successes, with some having gained employment and professional qualifications, some are leaders in their communities, while young children have flourished and are growing up bilingual thanks to the Arabic classes run by two of our refugee Trustees.

Plans for 2023-25

To address the project needs expressed by refugees, we are about to advertise for an experienced cultural consultant, funded on a basis of three days per month, to lead a strategic review of project fundraising and to support a range of project bids, based around requests from refugees, including youth club and arts-based projects; voices and narratives; leadership development through the creative arts; Music projects similar to the highly successful Songs of Sanctuary project (2017-19) – whose founder and leader organized a Bede's Anniversary Walk this year in which a number of refugees took part.

Employing the cultural project consultant will also enable us to recast the Co-ordinator role, to which we were recently unable to appoint. Advice from other VCOs, DCC and others suggests that the post needs to be full-time to attract candidates with the requisite experience but also that we need to separate out the project coordination, particularly with the recent designation of County Durham to receive people classed by the government as asylum seekers who do not fall into any of the resettlement schemes, so that we have capacity to respond to the needs of these new arrivals.

We have also started collaborating with the DCC Employability Durham team to run a series of Job Fairs, the first of which took place in November. This is still a challenging area, particularly for older refugees. We continue to work with the SIEF Enterprise Forum, and when we successfully recruit to a Coordinator post, we will carry out a skills and employability audit across our groups to focus future work. This is likely to include targeted one to one language learning support, which is still a barrier for some refugees, as well as signposting to training opportunities, internships and work experience. Mentoring from established entrepreneurs for those who want to start their own business or social enterprise remains a key goal, given that many people ran microbusinesses in their countries of origin. While online support and activity is appreciated, all parties continue to value face to face activity above all else.

We await with interest the findings of a healthcare project aimed at understanding the experience of successive cohorts in engaging with NHS provision, and we continue to press for bespoke mental health and wellbeing provision beyond the limited online options currently available, although we are mindful of the strain throughout mental health services across the UK. Should the project's findings support the need for specialized trauma- informed support/training, recruiting people fluent in Arabic, we will lend our voice and contribute to fundraising efforts. 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. Enabling leadership opportunities in other ways, for example by supporting a new iteration of the very successful Sanctuary in Politics mentoring initiative, is one of our development goals for 2023.

Offers from new volunteers have been very welcome, but establishing, co-ordinating 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 recently built on previous fundraising so that we can now advertise for a full-time coordinator post for three years, whose role will include key elements such as managing recruitment, training and support for our volunteers. The combination of the fulltime Coordinator role and part-time Project consultant

will enable us to carry out a full review of our activity and liaison with other organisations in the region, prioritise our work for the next three years, and distribute volunteer work and responsibility more widely. The coordinator will also carry out a search for 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, employability 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.

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.

Planning Priorities for 2023:

1. Recruit to the two posts and focus on consolidating and expanding our volunteer base, training and feedback.
2. Continue to engage widely, to build all forms of membership and support, across the County, encouraging, participating in and establishing local initiatives around building a culture of welcome.
3. Continue to help to prepare a positive community reception for new arrivals and others.
4. Establish project priorities and scope new cultural projects, in collaboration with local practitioners and charities.
5. Undertake a second mapping exercise of refugee skills and goals, to help focus our activities. (Interface with Enterprise Network and Durham Employability)

Susan Frenk (Co-Chair) 21/12/2022

Durham City of Sanctuary Statement of Financial Activity, April 2022

	Unrestricted funds (UF)	Restricted Funds (RF)	Endowment Funds	Total Fund
	£	£	£	£
Income & Endowments:				
Donations (UF: subs & donations)(RF: NERS targeted fundraising campaign)	6398.00	12000.00	0.00	18398.00
earned from charitable activities	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
earned from other activities	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
investment & other income	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
total	6398.00	12000.00	0.00	18398.00
Expenditure:				
cost of raising funds (JustGiving fee)	198.00	0.00	0.00	198.00
expenditure on charitable activity (UF: TV licences, gifts, educational supplies)(RF: conversation cla	18022.00	1150.00	0.00	19172.00
other expenditure (DBS checks, insurance, accountant)	415.00	0.00	0.00	415.00
total	18635.00	1150.00	0.00	19785.00
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)	959.70	0.00	0.00	959.70
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	-13196.70	10850.00	0.00	-2346.70
Totals brought forward	2733.11	15940.35	0.00	23026.75
Totals carried forward	-10463.59	26790.35	0.00	16326.76

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Income and Expenditure for the year ended 30 April 2022

Balance at Bank as at 1 May 2021		17699
Subscriptions and Donations		6398
Sir James Knott Trust Grant		<u>12000</u>
		36097
 Expenditure		
 School Uniforms and vouchers	1257	
Transport and Travelling Expenses	3761	
TV Licences	2300	
NERS Support	120	
Rents - Hire of Hall	1200	
Accountants Fee	25	
Expenditure on Bicycle parts and other Equipment	456	
Insurance	302	
Bank Charges	88	
Charge for Just Giving Account	198	
Karate Classes	556	
Sundry Expenditure	190	
Gym Memberships	1820	
Flamingoland Trip	2300	
Just Giving Campaign	1150	
Televisions	2185	
Tutor Online Sessions	1612	
Refreshments	265	
Balance at Bank as at 30 April 2022	<u>16312</u>	<u>36097</u>