

Durham City of Sanctuary

Annual Report 2023

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 sixth year as a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO). The designation of County Durham as a dispersal site for people categorized by the government as 'asylum seekers' and the war in Ukraine have brought new challenges in 2023. New strains of Covid and rising levels of social deprivation have also had a profound impact on our regional communities and placed great strain on local services. There is therefore a particular vote of gratitude to our volunteers, fellow Trustees and partnership organisations, for their work under increasingly demanding conditions.

The regional networks run by the national City of Sanctuary movement and the work of countywide bodies like the Durham Community Foundation and Durham Community Action continue to be invaluable sources of spaces to exchange information and good practice; create valuable online resources, including safeguarding and other key training modules; face to face training sessions for Trustees and volunteers and updates on key changes in both government policy and the Charity Commission requirements for charitable organisations.

We held our AGM, in person, in September, in one of the locations we cover, gracefully hosted by one of our Syrian Trustees who has been very active in building relationships both within the refugee community and with the local communities.

The quarterly Trustee meetings continue to be virtual to enable good attendance, given the geographical distances and caring responsibilities of Trustees.

We have finally successfully recruited to our post of co-ordinator, our first paid position. The successful candidate will start in January 2024.

We are grateful to the Sir James Knott Fund and the Durham Community Fund, for agreeing to carry over the unspent grant monies we successfully applied for, due to the lack of success in two earlier recruitment rounds.

Current Activities:

The number of drop-ins has risen to 6 and a further one (specifically requested by recent Afghan arrivals) is in process. These continue to be important opportunities

for external support (Social prescribing link workers; CAB advisors etc) as well as children's activities to enable adult socializing and some informal reading, writing and other targeted support. The Taste of Syria cultural exchange and fundraising events and outings organized by refugee Trustees or other responsible refugee adults continue to be supported or increasingly simply co-funded through ring-fenced funding in our accounts. As are Eid celebrations; Christmas parties and other get togethers, although finding suitable venues for the growing numbers has proven a challenge. The Ukrainian drop-in is flourishing and some of the Afghans have requested their own drop-in, but we would like to bring together all of our families (Syrian, Iraqi, Sudanese, Afghan and Ukrainian) for a celebration event in 2024. These number several hundreds of adults and children, so will require significant planning.

The County initiative to establish Schools of Sanctuary across the region is progressing.

We have also funded one to one tutoring in subjects like Maths and English where the need and appropriate provider are demonstrated; materials for craft/knitting workshops, work experience, internships and sponsoring of fees, transport costs and sundry needs for the pursuit of professional qualifications.

Northern Dance is delivering a ten-week programme of free dance and movement classes to women refugees. Given the popularity of this offer, we will investigate ways to embed a regular offer.

A very well received family sport and wellbeing day towards the end of the school summer holidays was funded by a grant from the Ballinger Trust. Activities were all indoors on the day due to the weather, but this did not dampen the enthusiasm of the participants. The wide range of activities, led by young, trained sports coaches, meant that our 5-16 year olds were all happily engaged.

The remaining funding will support a number of places in a local sport/dance programme during a half-term holiday week, where our refugee young people will mix with others from the local communities.

Young people have taken up fitness opportunities we have funded (gym membership; karate clubs; swimming classes; basketball), 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.



The Old Oak:

A number of Trustees and families attended the premier of Ken Loach's *The Old Oak*. We were all inspired by the talent of our refugees featured in the film. The film has already been shown in cinemas across the UK and was also generously provided free for a number of community screenings in areas where there has been some hostility towards refugees.

DBS:

uCheck are the company we use for DBS checks.

Durham Support for Muslim women: Dr Mashid Turner, Muslim Chaplain for Durham University has established this group.

We have continued to successfully raise funds for a range of emergency requests, following bereavements or other unexpected events, bicycles, PE equipment, school uniform and other essentials for schoolchildren. Smart TVs are 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 continued to collect clothing and a range of basic household items for people classed as asylum seekers, for which we rent a storage facility. We pay basic delivery costs for furniture and other large items. Volunteers continue to support families applying for indefinite right to remain to study for the Citizenship test. Students and local volunteers have also provided informal one to one tuition in a number of subjects. Refugees would prefer to be tutored by subject specialist teachers where possible, but we expect more to be available in local schools from January, with further government funding.

Student groups from Durham University continue to be hugely supportive, 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 some of the Drop-ins.

The success of the Syrian resettlement scheme, in which some cohorts have included a number of Iraqi families, continues. Successive cohorts have completed five years residence and have received support from DCC in applying for indefinite leave to remain. As with our first cohort, there is much to celebrate in their determination and resilience, capacity for joy and spiritual expression; care for one another and for the wider society. The numbers gaining employment and professional qualifications, and exercising leadership in their communities grows apace, while children have been able to grow in a multicultural environment as expert bilingual (or trilingual) speakers, thanks to dedication in offering Arabic classes of two of our refugee Trustees.

Plans for 2024-25

To address the project needs expressed by refugees, we will now 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).

This work will be possible thanks to the successful funding and recruitment to the Coordinator role, which will consolidate work in recruiting, inducting and ensuring the training of volunteers.

We will also now prioritise work with the DCC Employability Durham team and the SIEF Enterprise Forum, to carry out a skills and employability audit across all of 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 2024.

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 2024:

1. Recruit & embed 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) 21/12/2023

Durham City of Sanctuary Statement of Financial Activity, April 2023

	Unrestricted funds (UF)	Restricted Funds (RF)	Endowment Funds	Total Fund
	£	£	£	£
Income & Endowments:				
Donations (UF: subs & donations)(RF: NERS targeted fundraising campaign)	38257.50	21361.50	0.00	59619.00
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	38257.50	21361.50	0.00	59619.00
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	22312.60	2850.00	0.00	25162.60
other expenditure (DBS checks, insurance, accountant)	355.40	0.00	0.00	355.40
total	22866.00	2850.00	0.00	25716.00
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)	5738.63	0.00	0.00	5738.63
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	9652.88	18511.50	0.00	28164.38
Totals brought forward	-10463.59	26790.35	0.00	23026.75
Totals carried forward	-810.72	45301.85	0.00	44491.14

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Income and Expenditure for the year ended 30 April 2023

Balance at Bank as at 1 May 2022	16312
Subscriptions and Donations	47619
Sir James Knott Trust Grant	<u>12000</u>
	75931
Expenditure	
School Uniforms and vouchers	1465
Transport and Travelling Expenses	6826
TV and Licences	316
Drop in Kids Club	384
Rents - Hire of Hall and Storage	4400
Accountants Fee	35
Church Donation	100
Insurance	302
Bank Charges	97
Charge for Just Giving Account	198
Printing	85
Sundry Expenditure	183
Gym Memberships	2753
London Trip - Ukrainians	2457
Keswick Trip	1450
Training	630
Tutor Online Sessions	357
Refreshments	828
Balance at Bank as at 30 April 2023	<u>53065</u> <u>75931</u>

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The above Income and Expenditure Account has been prepared and from the accounting records and represents a true and fair view of financial position of the Charity for the year ended 30 April 2023

James Connolly

**James Connolly
Accountants and Tax Advisors**

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the**