

BIRMINGHAM COMMUNITY HOSTING NETWORK

Annual Report 2022-2023



"I hope you are well and thank you for all the support you and your team are giving clients in the hotels you are the main support and without you clients truly would be lost."

2022- 2023 IN NUMBERS



126

nights of accommodation
to people who would
have otherwise been
destitute



56

school or nursery places
secured for asylum seeking
children



10

young refugees
matched with volunteer
befrienders



44

number of English
conversation classes run in
hotels



25

young refugees
offered one to one
advocacy support



39

number of volunteers



152

number of visitors to
our family fun sessions



179

sanctuary seekers
supported during hotel
outreach sessions



39

families supported via our
family project



30

young people attended well
being day trips

THE BIRCH TEAM

Staff



Joy Robinson
Refugee and Migrant
Support Practitioner
(Family Befriending)
(0.5 FTE)



Steph Neville
Refugee and Migrant
Support Practitioner
(Family Fun Sessions &
Hosting Network)
(0.4 FTE)



Libbs Packer
Refugee and Migrant
Support Practitioner
(Family Fun Sessions)
(0.2 FTE)



Helen Hibberd
Development Worker
(0.2 FTE)



Alison Tinker
Refugee and Migrant
Support Practitioner
(Refugee Outreach
Project)
(0.4 FTE)

Trustees

Emma Hawthorne - Chair
Chris Benfield - Treasurer
Nicole Lewis - Secretary (registered April 2023)

Katherine Green
Kamilla Khalid

Fatima Batool (registered April 2023)
Izzy Knowles (registered April 2023)

Volunteers

Birch Network could not function without our amazing volunteer team, we are so grateful to our wide network of volunteers who give so much time and effort to the people we support. We want to thank each and every one!

Family Befriending

Huge thank you to all our befriending volunteers who have welcomed and supported so many young refugees into their homes, families and lives. And to all those who have supported us with the many wellbeing trips, driving people around, providing lunches, attending trips and offering a warm welcome and listening ear.

Family Fun Sessions

Huge thanks to all the volunteers who have supported the families we work with, welcoming them to our sessions, playing with the children, chatting to parents and helping to run English conversation classes. We also want to remember Sara Packer, who passed away in Oct 2023, Sara was a committed volunteer and supporter, supporting many families and sewing gorgeous bags for our welcome packs.

Hosting

Huge thanks to our hosting families who have welcomed our guests into their homes, supported them through very difficult transition periods and continue to offer support.

Refugee Outreach

Thanks to all our volunteers who have helped us run English Conversation Classes, helped us with advocacy work, getting people to and from events etc. Massive thanks to everyone who donated to our Shoe Appeal and helped us to collect over 400 pairs of shoes!

Our volunteers

Many thanks to our other volunteers who have helped support our work in a range of different ways: Jane Thakoordin for Christmas card and t-shirt designs. Sue Bell, who does an amazing job of tracking our finances, book keeping and helping us prepare our accounts for inspection. Thanks also to Ray Jellicoe, who independently examines our accounts.

Thanks also to Bharat Karavadra, who assists us with our website and emails.

ABOUT US

Here at BIRCH we offer support and friendship to people seeking sanctuary who are on the periphery of society. We focus on three main groups: those with no recourse to public funds who are experiencing destitution, young people who arrived in the country as unaccompanied asylum seeking children, and newly arrived asylum seekers families living in temporary accommodation (usually hotel accommodation).

VISION

Birmingham is a welcoming city where residents stand in solidarity with people seeking sanctuary, increasing resilience and wellbeing.

MISSION

BIRCH Network improves the lives of vulnerable refugees and migrants by relieving destitution and improving wellbeing through increased resilience.

AIMS

BIRCH Network aims to:

- provide community hospitality to asylum seekers and refugees in Birmingham and surrounding areas
- reach out and create spaces to offer support to asylum seekers, refugees and other vulnerable migrants
- reduce social isolation by offering compassion, welcome, practical support and help with integration into the local community

We mobilise volunteers and the local community to help us offer this support and to give a voice to those we are supporting. We offer advocacy and emotional support on a one-to-one basis and via group support. We are a small but responsive charity which allows us to be effective at responding to need and tailoring our work to help fill the gaps left by other services.

THE YEAR IN CONTEXT

It was another busy year for Birch Network and we continued to grow as an organisation and reach more sanctuary seekers than ever before. The expansion of hotels as accommodation for sanctuary seekers has meant that we are now offering more outreach work to a wider number of hotels and sanctuary seekers resident there. The growing asylum backlog has also meant that the type of support we offer has changed and adapted as the people we support are living for longer periods in hotels and we are witnessing the mental health impact that being left in limbo is having on them.

In June 2022 we recruited a new project coordinator, Alison Tinker, who has hugely developed our capacity to offer support to sanctuary seekers living in hotels. This new outreach project has been instrumental in helping us to connect with a wider range of support agencies and we have run some very successful welcome events to newly arrived sanctuary seekers with a growing range of support agencies. We have been able to offer English conversation classes, information hubs, and to link more and more people in with essential services and meaningful opportunities e.g. volunteer positions, sports/art clubs and college courses.

The year was dominated by the Nationality and Borders Act which came into force in April 2022 and by a general backdrop of anti-migrant and refugee rhetoric. This Act introduced various changes that will have a detrimental impact on refugees, emanating from the introduction of a discriminatory two-tier system of refugee protection (not currently in force) and also the concept of 'offshore processing', the use of 'reception centres', the criminalisation of people seeking asylum, and the age assessment of young people. In practice this has resulted in the Rwanda plan, which would see people seeking asylum sent to Rwanda. Although flights were boarded for Rwanda in 2022, as of January 2023, no one has been removed to Rwanda due to ongoing legal action. The threat of being deported to Rwanda has been very difficult for those awaiting the outcome of various legal cases and as with many other agencies, we wait to see whether this policy is deemed legal and what impact this might have.

Despite this, as you will see in the rest of the report, we have had many successes and have managed to support hundreds of sanctuary seekers. We have specifically been trying to offer more and more wellbeing and group activities to enable us to reach greater numbers of people who need support.



Night Bus Riders

We ran a successful night bus and ride and are very grateful to our trustees, volunteers and supporters who helped us raise over £2000.

We were also glad to welcome some new trustees at the start of the financial year, Emma Hawthorne and Kamilla Khalid, who bring a range of experience and expertise to our trustee team. Then following a successful AGM in January we welcomed a further three more trustees (Fatima Batool, Izzy Knowles and Nicole Lewis), who joined the team in April 2023. These new trustees bring vital experiences as service users, immigration advisers and local campaigner and volunteer host and are helping us to develop our Governance and make our Trustee Board more diverse and representative.

PARTNERSHIPS

In carrying out our activities during this very difficult year we have worked with and been supported by a variety of individuals and organisations. We are grateful for their hard work and professionalism.

- ASIRT
- Asylum Matters
- Baobab Women's Project
- Black Country Women's Aid
- Birmingham City Council Refugees and Migration Team
- Birmingham Centre for Arts Therapy (BCAT)
- Birmingham City University
- Birmingham City of Sanctuary
- Birmingham Progressive Synagogue
- Birmingham Schools of Sanctuary
- British Red Cross
- Care for Calais
- Christ Church Selly Park
- Coopah
- Dispossessed Collective
- Fircroft College of Adult Education
- Gas Street Church
- Hope Projects
- Migrant Help
- NACCOM - The No Accommodation Network
- MTF Coaching Academy CIC
- Refugee Action - Birmingham
- Refugee & Migrant Centre - Birmingham
- Refugee Support Europe
- St Chad's Sanctuary
- St Germain's Church

DONORS

Between April 2021 – March 2022, grants were gratefully received from the following trusts and funds:

- The Archer Trust
- The Cole Charitable Trust
- The David East Fund
- Deutsche Bank Fund
- The Dulverston Trust
- The Eveson Trust
- The William Dudley Trust
- The Edward and Dorothy Cadbury Trust
- The Grantham Yorke Trust
- George Fentham Birmingham Charity
- The George Henry Collins Charity
- The Grimmit Trust
- The Harry Payne Fund
- The Joseph Hopkins & Henry James Sayer Charity
- The Mosse Charitable Settlement
- Marsh Charitable Trust
- MSN Fund
- National Lottery - Awards for All
- The Patrick Trust
- The Roughley Trust

We are also extremely grateful to all the individuals and other community organisations that support our work, including; Anchor Church, Birmingham Progressive Synagogue, Selly Oak Quakers, Jonathan Collinson, Mark Torrance, Sara Willott, Nick Bell, Dr Asha Rogers, Andrew and Sara Packer, S Ahmed, Noakes Family, Simon Harris and Naomi Parish for a fantastically funny fundraiser. Thanks to the many other individuals who made financial donations, donated useful items and made purchases from our Christmas shop.



Trustees' Annual Report for the period

April 2022 To March 2023

Birmingham Community Hosting Network

Also known as BIRCH Network

Address; 204 Scott House, The Custard Factory, Gibb Street, Deritend, Birmingham, B9 4AA

Charity registration number: 1151763

Trustees:

Chris Benfield

Katherine Green

Kamilla Khalid

Emma Hawthorne

Nicole Lewis (from 26th July 2023)

Isobel Knowles (from 26th July 2023)

Fatima Batool (from 26th July 2023)

Independent Examiner:

Matt Gardner

Trustees Report:

Objectives and Activities

Objectives as set out in the constitution:

The relief of financial hardship amongst those seeking asylum in the United Kingdom or who are refugees, and who reside in the West Midlands.

To preserve and protect the physical and mental health of those awaiting and those granted refugee status and their dependents.

Activities:

- Community hosting network for destitute refugees and migrants
- Befriending and advocacy support for separated young refugees
- Sessional activities and support for newly arrived asylum-seeking families
- Outreach support to newly arrived asylum seekers living in hotel accommodation

Trustees' Responsibilities in Relation to the Financial Statements

The charity trustees are responsible for preparing an annual report and financial statements in accordance with applicable law and United Kingdom Accounting Standards (United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice). The law applicable to charities in England and Wales requires the charity trustees to prepare financial statements for each year which give a true and fair view of the state of affairs and of the incoming resources and application of resources of the charity for that period. The trustees are responsible for keeping proper accounting records that disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the charity and to enable them to ensure that the financial statements comply with the Charities Act 1993, the charity (Accounts and Reports) Regulations 2008 and the provisions of the trust deed. They are also responsible for safeguarding the assets of the charity and hence taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

Summary of main achievements

This year was a very busy year and saw staff supporting more sanctuary seekers than the previous 12 months. Despite there being many changes to the asylum and huge problems with delays, backlogs, policy and legal changes, our staff have remained flexible and responsive in their support. As an organisation we have achieved some fantastic outcomes for our beneficiaries and have increased our advocacy work significantly to fill the gaps left by closures of other services or changing need.

Our hosting project was quieter than normal, with fewer asylum seekers getting refused status, but we extensively supported one young, hosted guest and continued to support another hosted single mother with various issues. We also provided invaluable information to a range of other agencies which enabled them to take action to avoid destitution for their service users.

Our family befriending and advocacy project has been extremely busy, supporting over 50 separated young refugees, and our coordinator has been engaged in a lot more one to one advocacy and support. We have seen a big increase in age assessment cases and have worked with more under 18-year-olds than the previous few years. We have increased our wellbeing day trips and support and have continued to link in the most vulnerable separated young refugees with volunteer befrienders.

Our family support project evolved a lot over the course of the year, from stay and play sessions, to after school clubs and a big increase in advocacy work. This has mostly involved asylum seeking children find school places and supporting them with school uniforms, orienting them to the new school and sorting out bus tickets. We have also run more wellbeing trips and sessions. This project has supported over 50 families over the course of the year.

Our newer refugee outreach project which started in May 2022 has been very successful, with our practitioner supporting over 179 sanctuary seekers across three hotels in Birmingham. The support has included English Conversation classes, one-to-one advocacy support, group outings and activities. Our practitioner has made links with a wide range of agencies for effective cross-referral pathways and joint working, they have also run some very successful Welcome events as new hotels have opened.

The Development Worker continues to support staff to develop their projects and explore new funding opportunities. Our worker has drawn in funds from a wide range of funders over the course of the financial year as well as raising awareness of our work, which has resulted in a strong amount raised from community donations. We are in a good financial position going into the next financial year and hope to continue to develop our projects and maintain our reserves.

Structure, Governance and Management

Nature of Governing document

The charity is operated under the rules of its constitution adopted on 5th Feb 2013.

Financial Review

Birmingham Community Hosting (BIRCH) Network has a generous pool of local and regional charitable trusts and funders, as well as support from the National Lottery and good support from individual, and community funders. BIRCH raised £54,042 from charitable trusts and foundations and £11,222 from community donations, we raised £1,099 in sales from our first Christmas shop. £56,735 was allocated as restricted funding for specific projects, and £9,628 was unrestricted community donations, most of which went into our reserves. We also received £2,318 in income for specific items for individuals or for bus tickets for asylum seeking children to attend school. This is separated from other income as this is not spent on staff or project costs.

At the end of the financial year, we had total funds of £45,788. Out of these funds £23,884 (unrestricted funds) was designated to reserves (accounting for four months of operating costs), £21,904 (restricted funds) was carried forward to be spent on the projects that the funding was restricted to.

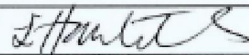
Reserves policy

Our reserves policy states that we should hold three months operating costs in reserves.

Declarations

The trustees declare that they have approved the trustees' report above.

Signed on behalf of the charity's trustees

Signature(s)		
Full name(s)	CHRISTOPHER (QUIN) BOWFIELD	EMMA HAWTHORNE
Position (eg Secretary, Chair, etc)	TREASURER	CHAIR
Date	7/1/2024	

Independent examiner's report to the trustees of Birmingham Community Hosting Network

I report to the trustees on my examination of the accounts of the Birmingham Community Hosting Network (the Charity) for the year ended 31 March 2023.

Responsibilities and basis of report

As the charity trustees of the Charity you are responsible for the preparation of the accounts in accordance with the requirements of the *Charities Act 2011* ('the Act').

I report in respect of my examination of the Trust's accounts carried out under s. 145 of the 2011 Act and in carrying out my examination I have followed all the applicable Directions given by the Charity Commission under s. 145(5)(b) of the Act.

Independent examiner's statement

I have completed my examination. I confirm that no material matters have come to my attention in connection with the examination giving me cause to believe that in any material respect:

- (1) Accounting records were not kept in respect of the Trust as required by section 130 of the Act; or
- (2) The accounts do not accord with those records.

I have no concerns and have come across no other matters in connection with the examination to which attention should be drawn in this report in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

Signed



Name: Matt Gardner

Address: 3 Lilburne Close, Worcester WR5 1TH

Date: 29 January 2024

Income & Expenditure account						
Year to 31 March 2023						
	£	£	£		£	£
INCOME	Unrestricted Funds	Restricted Funds	Restricted funds - Specific	Designated Funds	Expenditure	Totals
Funds received	9628	56735	2318	0		68680
Bank interest	0	0			0	0
Total Income (including B/F from previous year)						68680
EXPENDITURE						
Equip & Materials						1748
Refreshments						358
Wellbeing Activities						452
Fundraising Activities						
Staff Travel & Subsistence						1999
Volunteer Travel & Subsistence						149
Asylum Seeker Travel & Subsistence						861
Volunteer Stationery/Phone						113
Staff Stationery/Phone						165
Venue Hire						2560
Staff Salary Costs						50854
Reimbursements of Payments						3768
Hardship payments						117
Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children Expenses						59
Volunteer DBS Checks						100
Office Rent						273
Membership Fees						30
Public Liability Insurance						2630
Independent Examiner (Audit)						200
Sundries						2085
Total Expenditure						69260
Net of Income/Expenditure						-580
Funds brought forward from previous period						46368
Funds carried forward to next period						45788

Receipts and payments account

For the year ended 31 March 2023

	£	£	£		£	£
	Unrestricted Funds	Restricted Funds	Restricted funds - Specific	Designated Funds	Expenditure	Totals
RECEIPTS						
Funds received	9,628	56,735	2,318	-		68,680
Total Receipts						68,680
PAYMENTS						
Charitable Activities					65,493	
Payments to individuals/bus tickets					3,768	
Total Payments						69,260
Net of Receipts/(payments)						(580)
Cash funds last year end						46,368
Cash funds this year end						45,788

Statement of assets and liabilities

As at 31 March 2023

	Unrestricted funds	Restricted funds	Total funds
	£	£	£
Cash funds	23,884	21,904	45,788
Other monetary assets	-	1,401	1,401
Liabilities	-	1,139	1,139

Notes to the accounts

2022-23 Analysis of expenditure

Project	Total 2022-23	Total 2021-22
	£	£
Family Fun Sessions	19,601	14,108
Family Befriending	22,645	19,641
Hosting	8,013	6,889
Refugee Outreach Project	12,496	-
Development Work	6,505	3,295
Total	69,260	43,933

Analysis of Income 2022/23		
Description	Amount £	Sub total £
Unrestricted Funding		
Amazon	6	
Birmingham Progressive Jewish Synagogue	293	
CAF DONATE	1,710	
Christmas Shop	1,099	
Community Donations - Individuals	3,157	
Just Giving (Sponsored Night Bus Ride)	2,031	
Selly Oak Quakers	95	
Standing orders	1,010	
S Ahmed	227	
<i>Sub-total</i>		9,628
Restricted Funding		
Eveson Trust	2,500	
George Fentham income	2,500	
David East Fund	2,000	
The Dulveston Trust	5,000	
Harry Payne Fund	2,000	
Grimmit Trust	2,000	
Patrick Trust	1,500	
Dudley Trust	1,000	
Grantham Yorke funding	5,000	
MSN Fund	5,000	
National Lottery - Awards for All	9,960	
Joseph Hopkins Sayer Trust	750	
Cole Charitable Trust	1,000	
Archer Trust	1,000	
Deutsche Bank Small Grants	4,582	
George Henry Collins	1,000	
Roughley Trust	3,000	
HMRC CHARITIES (Gift Aid)	1,843	
MSN Fund	500	
Marsh Charitable Trust	500	
ANCHOR CHURCH Donation	1,500	
Mosse Charitable Trust	750	
Dorothy & Edward Cadbury Trust	1,000	
Simon Harris Happy Meals	350	
Savings United Gmb IWD donation	500	
<i>Sub-total</i>		56,735
Restricted funding specific		
B-HAM CITY COUNCIL - Debtors invoices payment	1,584	
Sandwell college	270	
Heinz, Anna, Carol Kroch Foundation	424	
S Ahmed	40	
<i>Sub-total</i>		2,318
Total Income	68,680	

Charity registration 1151763



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