

GROWING TOGETHER LEVENSHULME

England & Wales · Charity number 1166420

Details

Status Registered

Legal form CIO

Registered 2016-04-07

Register [View on the Charity Commission register](#)

Contact

Address 98 Burnage Lane
Manchester
M19 2NG

Phone 07891485066

Email growingtogetherproject@gmail.com

Website www.growingtogetherlevenshulme.org.uk

Activities

Objects: I) TO PROVIDE FACILITIES FOR RECREATION OR OTHER LEISURE TIME OCCUPATION BY PROVIDING AN AREA FOR USE AS A COMMUNITY GARDEN FOR: THERAPEUTIC HORTICULTURE; TRAINING AND SUPPORT FOR THOSE PERSONS WHO HAVE NEED OF SUCH FACILITIES BY REASON OF THEIR YOUTH, AGE, INFIRMITY, DISABLEMENT, FINANCIAL HARDSHIP OR SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CIRCUMSTANCES; OR FOR THE PUBLIC AT LARGE IN THE INTERESTS OF SOCIAL WELFARE AND WITH THE OBJECT OF IMPROVING THE CONDITION OF LIFE OF SAID INHABITANTSII) TO PROMOTE FOR THE BENEFIT OF THE PUBLIC, THE CONSERVATION, PROTECTION AND IMPROVEMENT OF THE PHYSICAL AND NATURAL ENVIRONMENT BY PROMOTING BIODIVERSITY, VEGAN-ORGANIC GROWING, HEALTH LIFESTYLES, PERMACULTURE AND CONSERVATION PRACTICES.

Activities: We run therapeutic horticulture sessions at our community allotment in Levenshulme, Manchester

Classification

- **How:** Provides Services
- **What:** Education/training, The Advancement Of Health Or Saving Of Lives, Environment/conservation/heritage
- **Who:** Other Defined Groups, The General Public/mankind

Geography

- Manchester City

Finances

Period end	Income	Expenditure	Assets	Employees
2025-03-31	£100,323	£87,848	-	-
2024-03-31	£78,066	£71,634	-	-
2023-03-31	£50,131	£56,046	-	-
2022-03-31	£55,520	£43,403	-	-
2021-03-31	£24,319	£31,301	-	-

Trustees

Name	Role	Appointed
JAQUI COTTON	Chair	2015-07-28
Amberley Garland		2025-04-30
Augusta Ward		2019-03-25
Jack Selman		2025-04-30
Nicola Scott		2019-07-04
Ruth Townend		2025-04-30
Tom Spencer		2015-07-28

GROWING TOGETHER LEVENSHULME

England & Wales - Charity number 1166420

Accounts

**Annual Report and Financial Statements for the year
1/4/2024 - 31/3/2025**



Growing Together Levenshulme

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Legal and Administrative Details

Charity Number: 1166420

Trustees:

- Jacqueline Cotton, Chair
- Tom Spencer, Treasurer
- Shamim Afshan
- Alice Nicolay
- Nicola Scott
- Augusta Ward

Registered Address: 98 Burnage Lane, Manchester, M19 2NG

Bankers: CAF Bank, 25 Kings Hill Avenue, Kings Hill, West Mailing, Kent, ME19 4JQ.

Independent Examiner: Owen Hewson

Trustees report for the year ended 31st March 2025

The Board of Trustees submit their annual report and the financial statements of Growing Together Levenshulme for the year ended 31st March 2025.

Charity details

Growing Together Levenshulme, informally known as 'the Garden', is a large, resilient community of asylum seekers and refugees centred around our thriving allotment site in Levenshulme, Manchester. Therapeutic gardening and creative activities are complemented by a comprehensive range of support provided in and beyond the Garden. We promote vegan-organic, sustainable horticulture principles, and nurture a supportive, peer-led community. Project participants (also referred to as members) travel from across Greater Manchester to the Garden to give and access support, and create a beautiful, relaxing space to enjoy together.

History, Structure and Governance

Growing Together was set up in 2011 as a partnership between Revive (an organisation supporting refugees and asylum seekers) and Highfield Eco-Allotment Project. Initially a project within Revive, it matured into an organisation in its own right, with Growing Together Levenshulme (GTL) registered by the Charity Commission as a Charitable Incorporated Organisation on 7th April 2016.

GTL was solely volunteer run for its first nine years. In November 2020, we gained our first part-time post of Support Manager, followed in January 2024 by a further part-time post of Project Coordinator. Vision and strategy are led by the Steering Group, comprising volunteers, staff and participants. Volunteers and staff collaboratively manage the organisation, ensuring sessions runs smoothly, participants and team are well supported, and the vision of the Steering Group is progressed. Trustees are appointed or reappointed annually at the AGM.

Risk management:

Trustees annually review risks which Growing Together Levenshulme is exposed to, and identify actions to monitor and minimise the potential impact of these risks.

Public Benefit:

When planning activities for the year, Trustees considered the Charity Commission's guidance on public benefit and are satisfied that our activities meet the principles outlined in that guidance.

Mission Statement:

To improve the lives of asylum seekers, refugees and others impacted by immigration control through access to a therapeutic horticulture project and holistic support, building community and networks of solidarity whilst learning and sharing skills around vegan-organic growing and creating a beautiful and relaxing garden together.

GTL Aims:

To improve the lives of people seeking asylum, refugees and others impacted by immigration control by:

- developing a therapeutic horticulture project with and for our members
- meeting members needs through signposting, referral and the provision of individualised support
- building community and networks of solidarity, mutual aid and peer support.

Values (as defined by participants):

Respect – Teamwork – Love – Friendships – Learning – Health.

The objects of GTL are:

- i) To provide facilities for recreation or other leisure time occupation by providing an area for use as a community garden for: therapeutic horticulture; training and support for those persons who have need of such facilities by reason of their youth, age, infirmity, disablement, financial hardship or social and economic circumstances; or for the public at large in the interests of social welfare and with the object of improving the condition of life of said inhabitants.
- ii) To promote for the benefit of the public, the conservation, protection and improvement of the physical and natural environment by promoting biodiversity, vegan-organic growing, healthy lifestyles, permaculture and conservation practices.

Growing Together Levenshulme is committed to working with marginalised communities, offering access to a community allotment to groups usually unable to take advantage of such opportunities. This year, our objectives have primarily been met through the provision of free therapeutic gardening and creative sessions alongside a range of comprehensive support to refugees and people seeking asylum in Greater Manchester.

April 2024 - March 2025: An overview of the past year

Growing Together Levenshulme's heart is our community and our Garden. Our uniqueness stems from the combined impact of offering a range of activities alongside trusted support, all from the beautiful nurturing environment of our thriving allotment plot. Throughout the year, the Garden has been a focal point of community, a space to share and develop skills in gardening, art, construction and leadership. Comprehensive provision of practical and emotional support has enhanced the therapeutic experience and positive outcomes. Our allotment has flourished and been valued as a beautiful, relaxing space to enjoy and support each other through traumas and celebrations.

162 people attended the project over the year, 98 of whom were women. 60% of participants were seeking sanctuary, whilst 40% had some form of status in the UK. We had 55 new participants, mainly self-referred following recommendation from peers, with an increase in external referrals. We ran 134 routine sessions, with a total of 137 individuals attending. 29 people came at least 20 times, with average attendance of 14 people per session.

We continued to ensure inclusive, participant-led decision-making structures underpinned our work. Participants led on planning, priorities and strategy through well-attended Steering Group meetings, each held across all sessions of a given week, supplemented by an online meeting to maximise participation. This year we benefitted from 24 committed volunteers who delivered an extensive range of gardening, art and construction activities, provided support to our members and co-managed the organisation. Volunteers have brought and gained a wide range of skills and expertise, and have commented on the therapeutic and rewarding experience of being part of our community. We welcomed 8 new volunteers and proactively supported participants to take on volunteering roles. Our two paid staff, both of whom have a refugee background, brought a wealth of expertise and care. We also recruited three new Trustees (to start April 2025) to strengthen our work.

'Deciding to volunteer at Growing Together Levenshulme is one of the best decisions I've ever made.'

Our Garden

'I see the Garden, I can breathe'

The Garden is now looking better than ever, having received much care and attention. Members have enjoyed seeing their Garden flourish, nurtured their favourite crops (notably rugari and strawberries), and planted flowers to uplift the space. We benefited from volunteers and participants with gardening expertise, enhancing our harvest. A highlight has been the beautiful orange Calendula flowers that adorned the Garden in the summer, were picked, dried and then made into moisturiser. People commented on the feeling of being grounded through connecting to the soil, the respite of spending

time in nature breathing fresh air, and how just being in the physical space of the Garden has helped ease pervasive stress and depression, making it easier to get through the week. Therapeutic benefits were further reinforced by three externally delivered mindfulness sessions.

'I love to be here. We meet friendly and kind people. We are in the lap of nature. Because of the natural, positive energy you sit, you talk, you are positive. We come here, you protect us and we forget our worries'

An external trainer from Hulme Community Garden facilitated three workshops to design and embed permaculture principles into our forest garden, developing knowledge and skills and transforming this space. Members decided what to grow, infrastructure improvements needed, and how to encourage wildlife to the Garden. We created a designated prayer area and built covered areas to share lunch, run activities and shelter from the Manchester weather. Members also completed construction work converting our new shipping container into a functioning kitchen and installed pipes to provide running water. Each week, members cooked a meal using freshly harvested vegetables. In a small way this helped with food poverty, with people living in hotels particularly valuing access to fresh, culturally appropriate food.

We routinely promoted project ownership, that this is our members' Garden, and provided options to join volunteer-led sessions, lead activities or work independently. Many of our members are highly skilled, but due to their immigration status, have limited scope to utilise these skills. Throughout the year, the Garden provided opportunities to develop skills and lead activities in gardening, construction, art, and cooking, bringing benefits to mental health and fostering resilience and agency. Our arts and crafts offer has gone from strength to strength with our art classes (facilitated by a volunteer ex-participant and other volunteer artists) being amongst our most popular activities. Building on this model, one of our participants provided much appreciated haircuts (until he was unfortunately moved from the area). Another volunteer ex-participant is piloting a sewing project, teaching basic sewing machine skills and repairing clothes.

'I learnt many things in this beautiful garden. I learnt how to do arts and plant. I made beautiful friends in beautiful garden. I like the fresh air and building skills.'

'Sometimes I want to calm myself. Painting helps me calm myself and relax.'

Despite everything our members are going through, the Garden is a joyful place, full of laughter, inspiration and hope.

'When I'm in the Garden I associate with others, people become friends, enjoy, share with each other. It's good! When I'm in the Garden it helps me stop thinking about the situation I am in. I forget everything. I am happy. I can do everything. It changes your mindset and your thinking.'

Providing Support

'Going above and beyond, help from the heart'

Alongside the activities, we provided a holistic range of flexible support to our members both at the Garden and remotely, ranging from occasional check-ins to focused support at times of need, with some people requiring intense longer-term support.

A significant challenge for members has been lack of access to essential legal advice and representation. We supported 64 people around legal issues including engaging with solicitors where possible, and referring/signposting to information to empower people to navigate complex legal processes themselves. We supported 16 people around family reunion processes, 28 around issues with their children, and sustained support to 13 who were moved out of the area, including signposting to local support.

77 people received support around physical health concerns. Many members experienced mental health challenges, with trauma stemming from countries of origin compounded by challenges and human rights abuses experienced in journeying to and surviving the hostile environment of the UK. 109 people received support around their mental health, including emotional support and referrals to counselling or specialist support. Many members said that coming to the project helped ease their stress and depression. Some said they didn't think they would be alive without the support of the Garden.

'I feel supported at the Garden. When people come to the Garden, share their problems, you stand with them in care and support them.'

We have seen most of our members, including those with refugee status, struggling to meet their basic needs due to the combined impacts of austerity, the hostile environment, and the cost of living crisis. We supported 75 people with referrals to foodbanks or community grocers, and referred 8 people to the Greater Manchester Migrant Destitution Fund. We supported 42 people through our Urgent Need Fund for support including travel to essential appointments – medical, legal and foodbanks; bereavement costs; problems with ASPEN cards or benefits; essentials whilst homeless; and getting evidence from countries of origin. 64 people were supported around education or employment and 50 around welfare rights. 95 of our members accessed support around housing over the year. We saw many newly recognised refugees face homelessness due to lack of social housing, the notice periods for asylum accommodation for a time reduced to just 7 days, and prohibitive private rents. We supported our members navigate the many challenges of getting bank accounts, British Residency Permits and Universal Credit and supported 18 people through challenging periods of homelessness.

'The GTL helping us with our Home Office meetings and our daughter school admission, our housing and all other aspects of life. GTL is like our backbone.'

Our approach is to stand in solidarity with our members and advocate in partnership with them. Participants commented that whilst they might go to other organisations for specific needs, they come to the Garden every week, often for years. We have built trusting relationships and this trust spreads quickly to new participants making us well-

placed to assess need and signpost to support. We were often the first place people turned to in crisis. We recognise we are often not best placed to resolve an issue and signposted or referred 134 members to additional support, drawing on our positive working relationships with many excellent organisations in the refugee sector and beyond.

'When I come here with a heavy load, by the time I leave the burden is taken'

Our Community

'Chatting, laughing and sharing. Having a good time together like family in the garden'.

People often say they come to the Garden so they can meet people who are in the same situation and know they are understood, supported and feel safe - 'It's our family'. We foster a culture of peer support so people can share their expertise and be there for each other. Participants have observed how friendships established at the garden help sustain them longer-term. We nurtured a sense of community through promoting project ownership and activities including a welcoming circle and celebrating birthdays. We ran Zoom sessions so those who were moved further afield, or were struggling with poor health, could still see their Garden, chat to friends and feel connected. Our members spanned all ten Greater Manchester boroughs, with many travelling several hours to get to the project, demonstrating the value GTL holds.

'Coming from home, feeling stressed, worried, you get to the garden and feel happy and relaxed. You see your family and you feel better.'

Many participants commented on the benefits of meeting people from different backgrounds, and building togetherness, understanding and respect.

'When we come here, we have different cultures but we are a family - we eat together, we laugh together, we cry together'.

Our members particularly looked forward to our parties and trips, with many commenting how important they are. We held a summer party (70 participants plus 13 family members) and a winter party (49 participants, plus 10 family members) with our Garden transformed into a festival environment with food, dancing, singing and games. In June, 85 participants embarked on our summer trip to Buxton. We shared an elaborate feast cooked by members whilst connecting with friends in the sunshine, and explored the local culture, history and woodland.

'Our kids really loved it! They're already asking about next summer's trip with GTL... It's wonderful that families can join in. The transportation is covered and we get to spend quality time together.'

Our members chose Manchester Refugee Support Network (MRSN) as somewhere that has shown them welcome and support for our 'giving back' project. Over several weeks we renovated their outdoor space, with members leading on all aspects of design and landscaping.

'When I was trying to get my (refugee) status, I came here (MRSN) and they helped me a lot. Now, year later, I am here helping them. I am giving back, it is a big circle. I am happy.'

We partnered with Friends of Highfield Park to run activities in the Country Park on our doorstep (14 sessions engaging 79 participants). We transformed their disused plot into a community resource, planted bulbs and hosted nature walks and activities. This expanded our community, brought benefits to mental health, and cemented the sense for our members that local green spaces are theirs to enjoy. In November, we ran 4 sessions at the Garden learning songs from different cultures and hosted a singing-round-the-fire celebration event. Unfortunately, due to unseasonal snow this had to be diverted from the Park to an indoor venue, but was still a magical event.

'The singing is very good. When people come and sing together it feels like releasing, you come from the loneliness, feel the joy, associating with others... When you sing you feel fulfilled. You feel happy. It takes away your worries, your depression, because you are outside with others, you enjoy it'.

Solidarity and Speaking Out

It has been a challenging year for migrants, people seeking asylum, and those who support them. Our members have endured a pervasive hostile policy environment with lack of access to legal advice and representation, lengthy waits on decisions, unsuitable and unsafe housing provision, increased homelessness, toxic media, and threats of detention and deportation. Our members were extremely fearful and retraumatised by the Conservative government's anti-refugee laws, detentions and the threat or deportation to Rwanda. The General Election brought further harmful rhetoric. Despite initial positives of cancelling the Rwanda scheme and reopening the asylum system (albeit without adequate legal representation), the Labour government has presided over an increasingly hostile climate. On a daily basis the impact on our members' mental health has been evident. We responded with care, community, and trusted information about changes to the relevant laws and their implementation. GTL had a presence at events to raise awareness of the hostile environment and 'anti-refugee' laws. We promoted opportunities to engage and speak out, including signing up to local and national statements to oppose damaging proposals, highlight positive alternatives, and demonstrate solidarity.

The summer brought a frightening escalation of racist violence, with people seeking asylum targeted in our communities, and our members fearful of, and sometimes exposed to, threats and violence. We made the difficult decision to close due to risks to our members whilst travelling to the project. Our team kept in touch with all members by phone and accompanied particularly vulnerable people to essential appointments. The underlying issues remain unaddressed and exacerbated, further impacting members' mental health. Our team engaged in local forums to build good practice and solidarity. Our Support Manager was on the Steering Group for Manchester's Local Authority of Sanctuary process, ensuring the experiences and concerns of our members helped shape this process. Refugee week provided an opportunity to propel a positive

narrative. Our members created an embroidered banner of artwork inspired by the theme of home. Participants displayed the banner and were supported to speak about their experiences at events at Macc (Manchester's VCSE support organisation) and Salford University.

'For years away from the homeland, the feeling of safety and happiness slowly disappeared. Depression took over, but eventually, I built my home here in the UK... Refugee Week affects me in two ways: it makes me sad, reminding me of the past, but also happy, celebrating Refugee Week.'

Financial Review

Income in the 2024-25 year came in the form of grants and donations, with continued success through crowdfunding.

During the financial year, income from grants and donations totalled £100,323 and spending totalled £87,851, resulting in a surplus for the year of £12,475. On the 31st March 2024, we had £33,919 available in the bank, of which £7,157 were unrestricted reserves.

We spent £13,323 on busfares for participants attending sessions and £5,111 on ingredients for our communal meals. We also distributed £8,698 to participants through Urgent Need Fund payments and travel costs to access foodbanks. These costs were all comparable to spending in 2023-24. We continued to employ our two part-time staff: Support Manager and Project Coordinator. As the Project Coordinator started part-way through 2023-24, our staff costs were higher in 2024-25 – totalling £38,597. We also paid £1,800 to sessional staff (musicians and event leaders) as part of our collaborative project with Fiends of Highfield Park.

We spent £2,699 on gardening materials - £1,227 for our garden and £1,472 through a collaboration with Friends of Highfield Park, to improve our local park.

We improved the garden by building new covered seating areas, a new shed/summer house for use by our gardening and People Support teams, and a designated kitchen, totalling £5,440. We focused on volunteer team health by organising team social events and supporting volunteers with travel and online meeting costs to improve accessibility (totalling £2,879). We organised six events for our participants – a trip to Buxton, Summer and Winter parties at the garden, and two events hosted by Friends of Highfield Park – a singing round the fire evening and a guided walk. These events totalled £3,562.

Due to the new costs (as of 1/1/2024) associated with hiring our second staff member (Project Coordinator) and the additional cost of our new collaborative project with Friends of Highfield Park, our costs were significantly more than the previous financial year (which was, itself, significantly more than any previous year), reflecting the expanded scope, work and support to beneficiaries of the charity. To enable this, GTL successfully raised sufficient funding to cover these costs, including ongoing funding

from our 3-year grant from The National Lottery Community Fund RC North West Region. We made a £12,475 surplus in 2024-25, as we received multiple grants towards the end of the financial year which will be spent during 2025-26. Due to consistent success with grant applications through the year covering core costs, and increased donations, our level of unrestricted reserves increased from £3,439 on 1/4/2024 to £7,157 on 31/3/2025. This is an improvement on the previous financial year but remains an area of concern, as the Trustees have suggested that unrestricted reserves should be £15,000 (3 months of bare minimum operating costs). Efforts should be maintained to ensure core costs are covered by grant funding, and additional unrestricted funds are raised.

We anticipate running at costs similar to this year in 2025-26 and into the future, as we now have two part-time staff and may need to increase staff capacity further.

Accounts have been prepared on a cash basis, using the Charity Commission standard Receipt and Payments CC16a form (see attached). GTL is not required to account on an accruals basis, or to be audited as it is a small organisation. GTL is required to file a tax return but is unlikely to have any tax to pay as it is recognised as a charity by HMRC.

Due to having exceeded the £25,000 income threshold, GTL's accounts for 2024-25 will be independently examined.

Profit & Loss 01/04/2024 - 31/03/2025

INCOME AND SPENDING			
INCOME			
2024-25		2023-24	
Donations (CAFdonate, unrestricted)	3654	Donations (CAFdonate, unrestricted)	1374
Bank interest (unrestricted)	64	Charity Service	3000
Community Health Equity Manchester (restricted)	10000	Garfield Weston	10000
Grant: The National Lottery Community Fund RC North West Region (restricted)	40356	Dowager Peel	7500
Souter Charitable Trust (core, restricted)	2250	Levenshulme Open Gardens (unrestricted)	2505
Peoples Health Trust - Nature For Health (restricted)	6000	Manchester Guardian Society (restricted)	2000
Dowager Countess Eleanor Peel Trust (core, restricted)	10000	Manchester Airport Community Fund (restricted)	1300
Hilden Charitable Trust (core, restricted)	7000	We Love Mcr (restricted)	4000
Garfield Weston Foundation (core, restricted)	10000	Oglesby Charitable Trust (Green Grants) (restricted)	6114
Allen Lane CT (core, restricted)	6000	Hilden CT (unrestricted)	7000
GM Mental Wellbeing (core, restricted)	5000	Grant: The National Lottery	21273

restricted)		Community Fund RC North West Region (restricted)	
		Unicorn (unrestricted)	2000
		Society of the Holy Child Jesus (restricted)	10000
Total	100323	Total	78066

SPENDING

2024-25		2023-24	
busfares	13323	busfares	13140
lunch	5111	lunch	5043
gardening materials	2699	gardening materials	1633
art materials	403	art materials	87
rent/insurance	720	rent/insurance	735
volunteer expenses	2879	volunteer expenses	2077
admin/stationery	2260	stationery	2682
infrastructure	5440	infrastructure	10222
kitchen equipment	186	kitchen equipment	704
UNF essentials	5893	UNF essentials	3925
UNF FB travel	2805	UNF FB travel	3902
training/workshops	1142	volunteer training	475
gifts for participants	898	gifts for participants	461
PPE	133	PPE	215
Trips/events	3562	Trips/events	4317
Paid staff	38597	Paid staff	22016
Sessional workers	1800		
Total	87851	Total	71633

2024-25		2023-24	
		Surplus for the Year	
Surplus for the Year	12475		6432

Statement of Assets and Liabilities at the Year End (31st March 2025)

Cash Funds	Amount
Current account (including cash held in float)	33,919

Assets retained for GTL's own use	Current value (optional)
Buildings (classroom space, kitchen, summerhouse)	17000
Polytunnels	3000

Liabilities	Amount due (optional)
None	n/a

Notes to the financial statements:

All figures are rounded to the nearest pound.

A surplus was made in the year 2024-25 as grants were received near the end of the year and will be spent in the year 2025-26.

The value of GTL's buildings (classroom/workshop building paid for during 2015-17; kitchen paid for during 2023-24; summerhouse paid for during 2024-25) is retained within GTL's assets as £17000; the value of GTL's polytunnels (including a large one paid for during 2021-22) is retained within GTL's assets as £3000.

This is a true record of the income and expenditure of Growing Together Levenshulme for the period stated above.

This report was approved by the trustees and signed on their behalf.

Jaqui Cotton (Chair)

Dated: 15/1/2026



Tom Spencer (Treasurer)

Dated: 15/1/2026



Appendix A: Independent examiner's report on the accounts



**CHARITY COMMISSION
FOR ENGLAND AND WALES**

**Independent examiner's report
on the accounts**

Section A

Independent Examiner's Report

**Report to the trustees/
members of** Growing Together Levenshulme

On accounts for the year ended	31/03/2025	Charity no (if any)	1166420
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Set out on pages 1-2
(remember to include the page numbers of additional sheets)

I report to the trustees on my examination of the accounts of the above charity ("the Trust") for the year ended 31/03/2025.

**Responsibilities and
basis of report** As the charity trustees of the Trust, 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 section 145 of the 2011 Act and in carrying out my examination, I have followed the applicable Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 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 which gives me cause to believe that in, any material respect:

- accounting records were not kept in accordance with section 130 of the Act or
- the accounts do not accord with the accounting records

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

Signed: Owen Hewson **Date:** 15th January 2026

Name: Owen Hewson

**Relevant professional
qualification(s) or body
(if any):**

Address: 10 Vernon Street, Old Trafford, Manchester, M16 9JP

Section B**Disclosure**

Give here brief details of any items that the examiner wishes to disclose.

Only complete if the examiner needs to highlight matters of concern (see CC32, Independent examination of charity accounts: directions and guidance for examiners).

No matters of concern to highlight

GROWING TOGETHER LEVENSHULME

England & Wales - Charity number 1166420

Accounts

Annual Report and Financial Statements for the year 1/4/2023 - 31/3/2024



Growing Together Levenshulme

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Legal and Administrative Details

Charity Number: 1166420

Trustees:

Jacqueline Cotton, Chair

Tom Spencer, Treasurer

Shamim Afshan

Alice Nicolay

Nicola Scott

Augusta Ward

Registered Address: 98 Burnage Lane, Manchester, M19 2NG

Bankers: CAF Bank, 25 Kings Hill Avenue, Kings Hill, West Mailing, Kent, ME19 4JQ.

Independent Examiner: Owen Hewson

Trustees report for the year ended 31st March 2024

The Board of Trustees submit their annual report and the financial statements of Growing Together Levenshulme for the year ended 31st March 2024.

Charity details

Growing Together Levenshulme, informally known as ‘the Garden’, is a large, resilient community of asylum seekers and refugees centred around our thriving allotment site in Levenshulme, Manchester. Therapeutic gardening, creative projects and a range of activities are complemented by a comprehensive range of support provided in and beyond the Garden. We promote vegan-organic, sustainable horticulture principles, and nurture a supportive, peer-led community. Project participants (also referred to as members) travel from across Greater Manchester to the Garden, to give and access support, and create a beautiful, relaxing space to enjoy together.

History, Structure and Governance

Growing Together was set up in 2011 as a partnership between Revive (an organisation supporting refugees and asylum seekers) and Highfield Eco-Allotment Project. Initially a project within Revive, it matured into an organisation in its own right, with Growing Together Levenshulme (GTL) registered by the Charity Commission as a Charitable Incorporated Organisation on 7th April 2016.

GTL was solely volunteer run for its first nine years. In November 2020 we recruited a freelancer to support the work of the volunteer team. Since August 2021 this person has been employed by GTL, 3-days per week. In January 2024 we gained our second part-time post of project coordinator. Vision and strategy are led by the Steering Group which comprises volunteers, staff and participants. Volunteers and staff collaboratively manage the organisation, ensuring sessions runs smoothly, participants and team are well supported, and the vision of the Steering Group is progressed. Trustees are appointed or reappointed annually at the AGM.

Risk management: Trustees annually review risks which Growing Together Levenshulme is exposed to, and identify actions to monitor and minimise the potential impact of these risks.

Public Benefit: When planning activities for the year, Trustees consider the Charity Commission’s guidance on public benefit and are satisfied that our activities meet the principles outlined in that guidance.

Mission Statement:

To improve the lives of asylum seekers, refugees and others impacted by immigration control through access to a therapeutic horticulture project and holistic support, building community and networks of solidarity whilst learning and sharing skills around vegan-organic growing and creating a beautiful and relaxing garden together.

GTL Aims:

To improve the lives of people seeking asylum, refugees and others impacted by immigration control by:

- developing a therapeutic horticulture project with and for our members
- meeting members needs through signposting, referral and the provision of individualised support

- building community and networks of solidarity, mutual aid and peer support.

Values (as defined by participants):

Respect. Teamwork. Love. Friendships. Learning. Health.

The objects of GTL are:

- i) To provide facilities for recreation or other leisure time occupation by providing an area for use as a community garden for: therapeutic horticulture; training and support for those persons who have need of such facilities by reason of their youth, age, infirmity, disablement, financial hardship or social and economic circumstances; or for the public at large in the interests of social welfare and with the object of improving the condition of life of said inhabitants.
- ii) To promote for the benefit of the public, the conservation, protection and improvement of the physical and natural environment by promoting biodiversity, vegan-organic growing, healthy lifestyles, permaculture and conservation practices.

Growing Together Levenshulme is committed to working with marginalised communities, offering access to a community allotment to groups usually unable to take advantage of such opportunities. This year, our objectives have primarily been met through the provision of free therapeutic gardening and creative sessions alongside a range of comprehensive support to asylum seekers and refugees living in Greater Manchester.

April 2023 – March 2024: An overview of the past year

Growing Together Levenshulme's heart is our community and our Garden. Our uniqueness stems from the combined impact of offering a range of activities alongside trusted support, all from the beautiful nurturing environment of a thriving allotment plot. Throughout the year, the Garden has been a focal point of community, a space to share and develop skills in gardening, art, construction and leadership. Comprehensive provision of practical and emotional support has enhanced the therapeutic experience and positive outcomes. This year our allotment has flourished and been valued as a beautiful, relaxing space to enjoy and support each other through traumas and celebrations.

Our Garden *'I see the Garden, I can breathe'*

Our Garden is now looking better than ever, having received much care and attention. Members have enjoyed seeing their Garden flourish, nurtured their favourite crops, and planted flowers to uplift the space. People have commented on the feeling of being grounded through connecting to the soil, the respite of spending time in nature breathing fresh air, and that just being in the physical space of the Garden has helped ease pervasive stress and depression, helping people get through the week. Over the year we ran 134 regular sessions, with a total of 145 individuals attending. 101 people came at least 20 times with 16 attending on over 40 occasions. Average attendance was 15 people per session, with around 50 people attending the project each week in the Summer months.

Our favourite crops this year have included rugari, onion leaves, strawberries and asparagus, with members harvesting crops and taking excess produce home to cook. We enjoyed planting, tending crops and growing food people missed from home. Our giant polytunnel enhanced the harvest and brought useful indoor

space. In March we welcomed a trainer from Hulme Community Garden to work with participants to embed permaculture principles and support them to design and work on our forest garden. Participants led on a significant landscaping project, turning our overgrown pond into a beautiful feature. This involved digging out and extending our existing pond, battling the Manchester weather to wade through mud and floods, and finishing the area with rocks, sand and pond plants. Our participants also lead on the design, site, and function for our new kitchen, with a shipping container craned over the fence to much excitement as snow fell! Over the Spring, members worked to construct walls, ceiling and add insulation.

Each week members cooked a meal using freshly harvested vegetables. In a small way this has helped with food poverty, with people living in hotels particularly valuing the opportunity to eat fresh food. Sitting down to share a meal together has brought much joy, appreciation of other cultures, and helped build community.

'I like cooking at the Garden, it is good for my mental health, my memory and mind is fresh. It's good to talk, and I'm happy to be here, it is my responsibility. At the garden they are my family, very special people. From my heart is the cooking. Everyone is happy, very happy. Of all the organisations in Manchester, the Garden is number One!'

A major change this year has been the inclusion of arts and craft options across all sessions as a core part of our offer. This has in part been driven by one of our new volunteers, a previous project participant and refugee herself, who brings teaching and fine art skills and a sensitivity in nurturing people's skills and confidence. Other volunteers with art skills have joined the team and injected creativity, with our art classes now amongst our most popular activities.

Many of our members are highly skilled, but due to their immigration status, have limited scope to utilise these skills. This year the Garden has provided opportunities to develop skills and lead activities in gardening, construction, art, and cooking, bringing benefits to mental health, and fostering resilience and agency. We regularly promoted project ownership, that this is our members' Garden, and provided options to join volunteer-led sessions, lead activities or work independently. Despite everything our members are going through, the Garden is a joyous place, full of laughter, inspiration and hope.

'Before I knew the Garden I was very stressed, sick so much. Then I came to the Garden. I learnt to plant salad, vegetables. I take a little cup and plant in my home. I feel better coming to the Garden.'

Supporting our Members

Alongside the activities we provided a holistic range of flexible support to our members both at the Garden and remotely, ranging from occasional check-ins to focused support at times of need, with some people requiring intense longer-term support. Over the year we supported 158 people, two-thirds of whom were women. Most but not all those we supported also came to sessions at the Garden. Of those who disclosed their status, around 60% were seeking asylum or destitute, whilst 40% had refugee status. We gained 55 new members, mainly self-referrals following recommendation from peers, and saw an increase in external referrals.

We supported 33 people around legal issues, including help collating evidence to enable credible referrals to solicitors, and liaising with solicitors on their behalf. We supported 6 people around family reunion processes, and sustained support to 12 who were moved out of the area, including signposting to local support. 25 people received support around physical health concerns, 9 were supported through family bereavements, and 25 around issues with their children. Many members of our project experience mental

health challenges, with trauma stemming from countries of origin compounded by challenges and human rights abuses experienced in journeying to and surviving the hostile environment of the UK. 23 people received support specifically around their mental health, including referrals to counselling or specialist support. Many members said that coming to the project helped ease their stress and depression. Some said they didn't think they would be alive today without the support of the Garden.

We have seen most of our members, including those with refugee status, struggling to meet their basic needs due to the combined impacts of austerity, the hostile environment, and the cost of living crisis. We supported 29 people with referrals to foodbanks, community grocers or similar, and referred 8 people to the Greater Manchester Migrant Destitution Fund. We supported 26 people to travel to foodbanks. A further 32 people accessed our Urgent Need Fund for support including travel to medical and legal appointments; bereavements; problems with ASPEN cards or Universal Credit payments; essentials whilst homeless; items needed for education or employment; home security following hate-crime; and getting evidence from countries of origin.

During Spring we celebrated increased numbers of people being granted leave to remain, but also saw many of these newly recognised refugees face homelessness due to lack of social housing and prohibitive rents. We supported 20 of our members navigate the many challenges of getting bank accounts, British Residency Permits and Universal Credit and supported several through challenging periods of homelessness. Overall, the most common support request was around housing, with a third of our members accessing support around homelessness or inappropriate housing over the year.

In May we facilitated a follow-up session with 26 graduates of our therapeutic 'Tree of Life' groups, an opportunity to reconnect with each other and reinforce the learnings from the sessions. In June we ran a further Tree of Life Course, facilitated by a volunteer clinical psychologist. The metaphor of a tree was used to speak about experiences in ways that weren't retraumatising and instead reinforced skills, qualities, hopes and strengths. All but one of those who completed the course showed improvement in mental wellbeing on the Short Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-Being Scale, while those who started with lower scores showed very significant improvement. People valued the opportunity to connect with forgotten skills, try meditation, and reflect on how they had applied Tree of Life insights to their lives.

Our approach is to stand in solidarity with our members and advocate in partnership with them. Participants commented that whilst they might go to other organisations for specific needs, they come to the Garden every week, often for years. We have built deep, trusting relationships and this trust spreads quickly to new participants. We are therefore well-placed to assess need and signpost to support. This year we were often the place people turned to first when in crisis. We recognise we are often not the best organisation to resolve issues and have positive working relationships with and regularly refer to many excellent organisations in the refugee sector and beyond.

'When I was in detention – I was not stressed because I had so many GTL people behind me and with me.'

One member described receiving the letter granting him and his family right to remain: *'When I received my letter from Home Office, first I told my family, then I told my Growing Together family... For any help on your case, foodbank, mental health, wellbeing sessions, letters, whatever you need, call. It gives confidence, helps so you don't give up. There's a lot of organisations that after a few years stop activities. Growing Together is always there, always doing their best. I never feel like I'm alone.'*

Our Community

'Chatting, laughing and sharing. Having a good time together like family in the garden'.

People often say they come to the Garden so they can meet people who are in the same situation and know they are understood, supported and feel safe – 'It's our family'. We foster a culture of peer support so people can share their expertise and be there for each other. Participants have observed how friendships established at the garden help sustain them longer-term. We nurture a sense of community through promoting project ownership and activities including a welcoming circle and celebrating birthdays. This year we continued to run monthly Zoom sessions so those who were moved further afield, or were struggling with poor health, could still see their Garden, advise on techniques to look after their favourite plants, chat to friends and still feel connected. Our members span all ten Greater Manchester boroughs, with many travelling several hours to get to sessions, demonstrating the value GTL holds for them.

'When we come here, we have different cultures but we are a family - we eat together, we laugh together, we cry together'.

It was great to reopen our site to the local community after restrictions on numbers due to Covid-19. In April we opened our Garden to visitors as part of the nationwide 'Good to Grow' initiative. Several of our participants volunteered on the day and it was moving to see the pride they showed in their Garden as they talked to members of the public about the impact the project has had for them. We followed this up with an event in June, welcoming 60 visitors as part of Levenshulme Open Gardens and, as the nominated charity of the year, raised £2,500.

Our members particularly enjoyed and looked forward to our parties and trips. This year we held 5 such events, with an average of 55 participants attending. These focal points for community and celebration were enhanced by members bringing their children, with positive memories made. Our summer and winter parties involved singing, dancing, a free shop and a feast. In June we visited RHS Bridgewater to introduce members to an accessible, inspiring and relaxing day out. And in August we travelled to Chester to share an elaborate picnic, explore the city walls and river, and appreciate the history whilst connecting with friends in the sunshine.

We resumed our 'giving back' projects, paused during Covid-19, to improve green space around places where our members have found support and welcome. We began work with Manchester Refugee Support Network on a project to landscape their outdoor space, with our members leading on all aspects of design and landscaping. We also embarked on a new partnership with Friends of Highfield Country Park, encouraging engagement with the large green space on our doorstep. We facilitated our members' access to Friends of Highfield activities including nature walks, scything and coppicing. In October we held a lovely evening singing together around a fire in the Country Park. We have plans to build on this partnership to extend our community and cement the sense for our members that local green spaces are theirs to enjoy.

Influencing

From July till December, Dr Jo Biglin, University of Salford, conducted ethnographic work at the Garden, exploring participants experiences of wellbeing and healing through embodied and sensory experiences. Emerging findings show the ways in which a sense of transnational belonging is realised and enacted within the allotment through sensory engagement with plants. In November, members of the Garden were involved in co-creating a public engagement event at the University of Salford as part of the Festival of Social Science. GTL members exchanged their knowledge of gardening through practical planting activities,

alongside children from the local community. They shared their experiences of the asylum journey and the positive impact the allotment had on their mental health and sense of belonging in Manchester.

In a political and media environment that was increasingly hostile to asylum seekers, many of our members were extremely fearful of the Rwanda threat, whilst others endured lengthy waits on decisions, highly unsuitable housing provision, threats of detention and deportation, and a raft of hostile policies impacting every aspect of their lives. We ensured our members had access to trusted information about changes to the relevant laws and their implementation. GTL had a presence at events to raise awareness of the hostile environment and the Conservative Government's 'anti-refugee' laws. We promoted opportunities to engage with these processes and speak out, including signing up to local and national statements to oppose these damaging proposals, highlight positive alternatives, and demonstrate solidarity.

The organisation

We continued to ensure inclusive, participant-led decision-making structures underpinned the project. Participants had a strong voice in project direction through engaging in well-attended Steering Group meetings, each held over three sessions supplemented by a Zoom meeting to maximise participation. Members refined the overall aims of GTL, planned trips, progressed plans for the kitchen, and identified new areas to focus on including skill sharing opportunities, training needs and activities to support mental health. It was moving to hear members discussing and collectively identifying the values they see as defining the Garden – respect, teamwork, love, friendships, learning and health.

As a volunteer-ran project, our committed volunteer team carry significant responsibility. Over the year, 22 volunteers delivered an extensive range of gardening, art and construction activities as well as providing support to our members and collectively managing the organisation. In April our team benefited from therapeutic gardening training from Thrive. This year we welcomed 16 new volunteers who brought a range of expertise including lived experience of the asylum system, refugee sector case work, academic research, teaching, group facilitation, evaluation and gardening skills, with each volunteer bringing extra dimensions and energy to our team. We were sad to say goodbye to several volunteers, but glad to see many build on their experience at the Garden to gain paid employment.

We are now a few years into having our first paid post of Support Manager, with this role proving indispensable and greatly enhancing the depth and quality of the support we provide to our members. In January we employed a second post of Project Coordinator to lead on session logistics and volunteer support. This new role is proving highly beneficial in ensuring our volunteers are better supported and freeing up volunteer time to focus on project development. Both our employees have a refugee background. They bring a wealth of expertise, passion and care, and have greatly enhanced our project.

Financial Review

Income in the 2023-24 year came in the form of grants and donations, with continued success through crowdfunding.

During the financial year, income from grants and donations totalled £78,066 and spending totalled £71,633, resulting in a surplus for the year of £6,432. On the 31st March 2024, we had £21,447 available in the bank, of which £3,439 were unrestricted reserves.

We spent £13,140 on busfares to enable people to attend the project, £5,043 on ingredients for our communal meals and £1,633 on gardening materials. We also distributed £7,827 to participants through Urgent Need Fund payments and travel costs to access foodbanks. These costs were all comparable to spending in 2022-23. We continued to employ our part-time Support Manager and also secured funding to recruit a second part-time employee (Project Co-ordinator) - in 2023-24 our total staff costs were £22,016. As the Project Co-ordinator only started in the last quarter of the year, our staff costs will be higher in future years.

We improved the Garden by building a designated kitchen, which cost £10,222. We focused on volunteer team health by organising team social events and supporting volunteers with childcare, travel and online meeting costs to improve accessibility (totalling £2,077). Spending on the five special events for our participants including trips to RHS Bridgewater garden and Chester, totalled £4,317.

Due to the combination of routine costs (running sessions, Urgent Need Fund and staff costs for our Support Manager) remaining higher than pre-pandemic levels, the new costs associated with hiring our second staff member and the additional cost of building our new kitchen, our spending was significantly more than in any previous year, reflecting the expanded scope, work and support to beneficiaries of the charity. GTL successfully raised sufficient funding to cover these costs, including securing our largest ever grant: £119,639 (over three years) from The National Lottery Community Fund RC North West Region. This will cover nearly half of our anticipated annual core costs for the next three years, providing a valuable level of security. We made a slight surplus in 2023-24, as we received some grant funding at the end of the financial year which will be spent during 2024-25. Despite this surplus, our level of unrestricted reserves decreased from £9,823 on 1/4/2023 to £3,439 on 31/3/2024 due to a period of spending when we didn't have live grants covering core costs. This is an area of concern, and the Trustees are aiming for unrestricted reserves to increase to £15,000 (3 months of minimum operating costs) to reflect the new, higher costs associated with running the project. We are confident that grant funding will keep the project operating securely, with efforts made to raise additional unrestricted funds.

We anticipate running at higher costs this year and into the future, as we now have two part-time staff.

Accounts have been prepared on a cash basis, using the Charity Commission standard Receipt and Payments CC16a form (see attached). GTL is not required to account on an accruals basis, or to be audited as it is a small organisation. Additionally, GTL is not required to file a tax return as it is recognised as a charity by HMRC.

Due to having exceeded the £25,000 income threshold, GTL's accounts for 2023-24 have been independently examined by Owen Hewson, see report at the end of this document.

Profit & Loss 01/04/2023 - 31/03/2024

INCOME AND SPENDING			
INCOME			
2023-24		2022-23	
Donations (CAF donate, unrestricted)	1374	Donations	1860
Grant: Charity Service	3000	Grant: Allen Lane	7000
Grant: Garfield Weston	10000	Grant: A.R.M. (unrestricted)	7466
Grant: Dowager Peel	7500	Grant: Awards for All	10000
Levenshulme Open Gardens (unrestricted)	2505	Grant: Souter CT	5000
Grant: Manchester Guardian Society (restricted)	2000	Grant: OCT Winter (unrestricted)	1500
Grant: Manchester Airport Community Fund (restricted)	1300	Grant: Society of the Holy Innocent Jesus	10000
Grant: We Love Mcr (restricted)	4000	Grant: Ashworth CT	5005
Grant: Oglesby Charitable Trust (Green Grants) (restricted)	6114	Grant (unrestricted): Volunteer wellbeing	1500
Grant: Hilden CT (unrestricted)	7000	Grant: Volunteer Expenses	800
Grant: The National Lottery Community Fund RC North West Region (restricted)	21273		
Grant: Unicorn (unrestricted)	2000		
Grant: Society of the Holy Child Jesus (restricted)	10000		
Total	78066	Total	50131
SPENDING			
2023-24		2022-23	
busfares	13140	busfares	12038
lunch	5043	lunch	4734
gardening materials	1633	gardening materials	4203
art materials	87		
rent/insurance	735	rent	553
volunteer expenses	2077	volunteer expenses	2844
stationery	2682	stationery	1932
infrastructure	10222	infrastructure	662
kitchen equipment	704		
Urgent Need Fund (UNF) essentials	3925	UNF essentials	5020
UNF FB travel	3902	UNF FB travel	2595
UNF phone credit	0	UNF phone credit	96
volunteer training	475	volunteer training	420
gifts for participants	461	gifts for participants	766
PPE	215	PPE	303
Trips/events	4317	Trips/events	1827
Paid staff	22016	Paid staff	18054
Total	71633	Total	56046

Surplus for the Year	6432			-5915
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Statement of Assets and Liabilities at the Year End (31st March 2024)

Cash Funds	Amount
Current account	21,447

Assets retained for GTL's own use	Current value (optional)
Classroom space	6500
Polytunnels	4000
Kitchen	10000

Liabilities	Amount due (optional)
None	n/a

Notes to the financial statements:

All figures are rounded to the nearest pound.

A surplus was made in the year 2023-24 as grants were received near the end of the year and will be spent in the year 2024-25.

The value of GTL's classroom/workshop building (paid for during 2015-17), is retained within GTL's assets as £6500; the value of GTL's polytunnels (including a large one paid for during 2021-22) is retained within GTL's assets as £4000. The new kitchen (a converted shipping container, paid for during 2023/2024) is retained within GTL's assets as £10000

This is a true record of the income and expenditure of Growing Together Levenshulme for the period stated above.

This report was approved by the trustees and signed on their behalf.

Jaqui Cotton (Chair),



Tom Spencer (Treasurer)



Appendix A: Independent examiner's report on the accounts



**CHARITY COMMISSION
FOR ENGLAND AND WALES**

**Independent examiner's report on
the accounts**

Section A

Independent Examiner's Report

Report to the trustees/
members of Growing Together Levenshulme

On accounts for the year ended	31/03/2024	Charity no (if any)	1166420
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Set out on pages 1-2
(remember to include the page numbers of additional sheets)

I report to the trustees on my examination of the accounts of the above charity ("the Trust") for the year ended 31/03/2024.

Responsibilities and basis of report

As the charity trustees of the Trust, 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 section 145 of the 2011 Act and in carrying out my examination, I have followed the applicable Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 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 which gives me cause to believe that in, any material respect:

- accounting records were not kept in accordance with section 130 of the Act or
- the accounts do not accord with the accounting records

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

Signed: Owen Hewson Date: 04/01/2025

Name: Owen Hewson

Relevant professional qualification(s) or body (if any):

Address: 10 Vernon Street, Manchester
M16 9JP

Section B

Disclosure

Only complete if the examiner needs to highlight

matters of concern (see CC32, Independent examination of charity accounts: directions and guidance for examiners).

Give here brief details of any items that the examiner wishes to disclose.

No matters of concern to note.



CHARITY COMMISSION
FOR ENGLAND AND WALES

Charity Name	No (if any)
Growing Together Levenshulme	1166420

CC16a

Receipts and payments accounts

For the period from	Period start date	To	Period end date
	1/4/2023		31/3/2024

Section A Receipts and payments

	Unrestricted funds	Restricted funds	Endowment funds	Total funds	Last year
	to the nearest £	to the nearest £	to the nearest £	to the nearest £	to the nearest £
A1 Receipts					
Grants	2,000	72,187	-	74,187	48,271
Donations	3,879	-	-	3,879	1,860
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
Sub total (Gross income for AR)	5,879	72,187	-	78,066	50,131
A2 Asset and investment sales, (see table).					
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
Sub total	-	-	-	-	-
Total receipts	5,879	72,187	-	78,066	50,131
A3 Payments					
workshops sessions	4,607	15,511		20,118	22,044
Volunteer expenses	565	1,512		2,077	2,844
Insurance/Rent	-	735		735	553
Stationery	1,933	749		2,682	1,932

Infrastructure	955	9,972		10,927	662
Marketing/fundraising/outreach				-	-
Training	475	-		475	420
Urgent Need Fund	-	7,827		7,827	7,711
Staff costs	-	22,016		22,016	18,054
Events	3,728	1,049		4,777	1,827
Sub total	12,263	59,371	-	71,634	56,046

A4 Asset and investment purchases, (see table)				-	
	-	-	-	-	
Sub total	-	-	-	-	-

Total payments	12,263	59,371	-	71,634	56,046
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Net of receipts/(payments)	- 6,384.00	12,816.00	-	6,432	- 5,915
A5 Transfers between funds	-	-	-	-	-
A6 Cash funds last year end	9,823	5,191	-	15,015	20,930
Cash funds this year end	3,439	18,007	-	21,447	15,015

Section B Statement of assets and liabilities at the end of the period

Categories	Details	Unrestricted funds to nearest £	Restricted funds to nearest £	Endowment funds to nearest £
B1 Cash funds	Current account		15,559	-
	Reserves	10,439		-
		-	-	-
	Total cash funds	3,439	18,007	-
	(agree balances with receipts and payments account(s))	OK	OK	OK

	Unrestricted funds to nearest £	Restricted funds to nearest £	Endowment funds to nearest £
B2 Other monetary assets			
	-	-	-
	-	-	-
	-	-	-
	-	-	-
	-	-	-
	-	-	-

	Fund to which asset belongs	Cost (optional)	Current value (optional)
B3 Investment assets			
		-	-
		-	-
		-	-
		-	-
		-	-



	Fund to which asset belongs	Cost (optional)	Current value (optional)
B4 Assets retained for the charity's own use			
Classroom space	Unrestricted	-	6,500
Polytunnels	Unrestricted	-	4,000
Kitchen	Unrestricted	-	10,000
		-	-
		-	-
		-	-
		-	-
		-	-

		-	-
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B5 Liabilities

Details	Fund to which liability relates	Amount due (optional)	When due (optional)
		-	
		-	
		-	
		-	
		-	

Signed by one or two trustees on behalf of all the trustees

Signature	Print Name	Date of approval
	Tom Spencer	24/9/24
	Jaqui Cotton	24/9/2024



Section A Independent Examiner's Report

Report to the trustees/
members of

On accounts for the year ended Charity no (if any)

Set out on pages (remember to include the page numbers of additional sheets)

I report to the trustees on my examination of the accounts of the above charity ("the Trust") for the year ended 31/03/2024.

Responsibilities and basis of report As the charity trustees of the Trust, you are responsible for the preparation of the accounts in accordance with the requirements of the Charities Act 2011 ("the Act").

Independent examiner's statement

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

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

- accounting records were not kept in accordance with section 130 of the Act or
- the accounts do not accord with the accounting records

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

Signed: Date:

Name:

Relevant professional qualification(s) or body (if any):

Address:

Only complete if the examiner needs to highlight matters of concern (see CC32, Independent examination of charity accounts: directions and guidance for examiners).

Give here brief details of any items that the examiner wishes to disclose.

No matters of concern to note.

GROWING TOGETHER LEVENSHULME

England & Wales - Charity number 1166420

Accounts

GROWING
TOGETHER
LEVENSHULME



Growing Together Levenshulme

Charity Number: 1166420

Draft Annual Report and Financial Statements for the year ended 31st March 2023

Content

Legal and administrative details	pg. 1
Trustees report	pg. 2-7
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Closing words	pg. 10
Signed	pg.10

Legal and Administrative Details

Charity Number: 1166420

Trustees:

Jacqueline Cotton, Chair

Tom Spencer, Treasurer

Graham Kayes, Secretary

Augusta Ward

Nicola Scott

Shamim Afshan

Alice Nicolay

Registered Address: 98 Burnage Lane, Manchester, M19 2NG

Bankers: CAF Bank, 25 Kings Hill Avenue, Kings Hill, West Mailing, Kent, ME19 4JQ.

Trustees report for the year ended 31st March 2023

The Board of Trustees submit their annual report and the financial statements of Growing Together Levenshulme (GTL) for the year ended 31st March 2023.

Growing Together Levenshulme, informally known as 'the Garden', is a large, resilient community of asylum seekers and refugees centred around our thriving allotment site in Levenshulme, Manchester. Therapeutic gardening sessions are complemented by informed and well-networked support. We promote vegan-organic, sustainable horticulture principles and nurture a supportive community. We welcome people from across Greater Manchester to our Garden, to give and access support and to create a beautiful, relaxing space to enjoy together.

History, Structure and Governance

Growing Together was set up in 2011 as a partnership between Revive (an organisation supporting refugees and asylum seekers) and Highfield Eco-Allotment Project. It was initially a project within Revive before maturing into an organisation in its own right. The project has run consistently since 2011 and became a charity in 2016. Growing Together Levenshulme was registered by the Charity Commission as a Charitable Incorporated Organisation on 7th April 2016.

GTL was solely volunteer run for its first nine years. In November 2020, we recruited a freelancer to support the work of the volunteer team. Since August 2021, this person has been employed by GTL, working 3-days per week. Vision and strategy is led by the Steering Group which comprises volunteers, staff and participants. Volunteers and staff member collaboratively manage the organisation, ensure the project runs smoothly, participants and team are well supported, and the vision of the Steering Group is progressed. Trustees are appointed or reappointed annually at the AGM. The Trustees are ultimately responsible for the governance of the organisation, ensuring it fulfils its legal obligations, carries out activities to fulfil its aims for the public benefit, and oversees strategy and resources.

Risk management: Trustees annually review major risks which Growing Together Levenshulme is exposed to, and identify actions to monitor and minimise the potential impact of these risks.

Public Benefit: When planning activities for the year, Trustees consider the Charity Commission's guidance on public benefit and are satisfied that our activities meet the principles outlined in that guidance. Growing Together Levenshulme's purposes meet the public benefit requirement in that it provides identifiable benefits to a sufficient section of the public, defined in relation to membership of a marginalised community.

Mission Statement:

Creating a therapeutic horticulture project with disadvantaged groups, particularly refugees and asylum seekers, building community and networks of solidarity whilst learning and sharing skills around vegan-organic growing, and creating a beautiful and relaxing garden together.

The objects of GTL are:

- i) To provide facilities for recreation or other leisure time occupation by providing an area for use as a community garden for: therapeutic horticulture; training and support for those persons who have need of such facilities by reason of their youth, age, infirmity, disablement, financial hardship or social and economic circumstances; or for the public

at large in the interests of social welfare and with the object of improving the condition of life of said inhabitants.

- ii) To promote for the benefit of the public, the conservation, protection and improvement of the physical and natural environment by promoting biodiversity, vegan-organic growing, healthy lifestyles, permaculture and conservation practices.

Growing Together Levenshulme is committed to working with marginalised communities, offering access to a community allotment to groups usually unable to take advantage of such opportunities. This year, we have met our objectives primarily through the provision of free therapeutic gardening sessions and a range of comprehensive support to asylum seekers and refugees living in Greater Manchester.

Our Aims: To improve the lives of asylum seekers, refugees and others subject to immigration control through:

- developing a therapeutic horticulture project with and for our members
- providing individualised support, building on existing provision to fill gaps and meet needs
- building community and networks of solidarity, mutual aid and peer support

2022 – 2023 ~ An overview of the past year

Growing Together Levenshulme is unique locally in providing support and opportunities to develop skills and agency from the beautiful, nurturing environment of a thriving allotment plot. Throughout the year we have maintained a continuity of support to all our members, our allotment has flourished and been valued as a beautiful, relaxing space to enjoy, share and support each other through traumas and celebrations. The project became gradually busier over the first few months of the year, as people with Covid-19 vulnerabilities returned to the warmest of welcomes. We gained 68 new members, most coming from hotels where there was initially little support in place and they were very reliant on the support they received at the Garden. 138 people attended the project over the course of the year. 45 people came at least 20 times with 11 attending on over 40 occasions. Average attendance at our routine gardening sessions was 13 people, and by the end of the year we were seeing 45 to 50 people attending the project each week.

Our Garden *'I see the Garden, I can breathe'*

The Garden is the heart of our project and this year it was looking better than ever, having received a lot of care and attention. Members have enjoyed seeing their Garden flourish, their favourite plants grow and flowers brighten the space. We often hear people comment that just being in the physical space of the Garden eases stress and depression, and helps them get through the week.

Our favourite crops this year have included rugari, sweet potatoes, strawberries and asparagus, with members harvesting crops and taking excess produce home to cook. We enjoyed planting, tending crops, building new raised beds and growing food people missed from back home.

It was our first year of growing in our new giant polytunnel which enhanced the harvest and also brought useful well-ventilated indoor space for craft activities. Members especially enjoyed art classes at the Garden, delivered by one of our members. Our more active members finished laying

the new path, made from found paving stones, designed and built with skill and artistry. We also started plans to turn our overgrown pond into a prominent feature.

Many of our members are highly skilled, but due to their immigration status, have limited scope to utilise their skills. The Garden provided opportunities to develop and share skills in gardening, construction, art, cooking and English language, and for members to take on leadership roles. This has brought benefits to mental health, and fostered resilience and agency. We regularly promoted project ownership, that this is our members' Garden, with options to join volunteer-led sessions, lead activities themselves or work independently. Members have commented on feeling grounded through connecting to the soil, and finding respite through being in nature.

As winter hit, with the soil frozen and activities limited, an old pot of bright pink paint was found. Over the next few weeks our seating area exploded into a vibrant space, with raised beds, trellises and random objects painted in a myriad of colours, bringing energy to the space and lifting the mood of our members through the difficult winter months. Despite everything our members are going through, the Garden is a joyous place, full of laughter, inspiration and hope.

'Coming to the Garden gives me a good feeling of being in nature and being alive because here you can see the growth of the plants that you and your friends have planted.'

Looking at the Garden makes my day fresh. When I am stress, I know where to come!'

Supporting our Members

This year we sustained and built on the increased reach and depth of support that we had provided to our members during the Covid pandemic. Over the year, 129 people engaged with our People Support team. This included assessing need, providing support, and referring to external partners. The level of contact ranged according to need, with some members appreciating an occasional check-in, others requesting focused support around particular times of need, and others receiving intense long-term support.

We have seen most of our members, including those with refugee status, struggling to meet their basic needs due to the combined impacts of austerity, the hostile environment, and the cost of living crisis. We supported 33 people with access to food through referral to foodbanks, community grocers or similar, and referred 13 people to the Greater Manchester Migrant Destitution Fund. We supported 46 people through our Urgent Need Fund around a range of needs including travel to foodbanks and important medical and legal appointments; bereavements; problems with ASPEN cards or Universal Credit payments; and items needed for education or employment.

Through regular check-in phone calls with all our members and in-person contact at the Garden, we provided emotional and practical support on a range of issues. We supported 10 members to progress their legal cases, including supporting them to get evidence together to enable credible referrals to solicitors, and liaising with solicitors on their behalf. We supported a further 5 people around family reunion processes. We sustained support to 9 people who struggled having been moved out of the area, including signposting to local support. We worked alongside other agencies to support a member who was detained, securing legal representation and his release. We supported many of our members through mental health difficulties, including referring to counselling and statutory services, as well as supporting members around wider health issues. We supported 16 of our members who had recently gained refugee status to navigate the many challenges around

getting bank accounts, British Residency Permits, Universal Credit and housing, including supporting some through challenging periods of homelessness.

Our approach is to stand in solidarity with our members and advocate in partnership with them. We also foster a culture of peer support as often the best person to offer advice or support is someone who has faced a similar situation and is happy to share their expertise. Participants comment that whilst they might go to other organisations around a specific need, they come to the Garden every week, often for years. We have built deep, trusting relationships and this trust spreads quickly to new participants. We are therefore well-placed to assess need and signpost to support. This year we have often been people's first place to turn in a crisis. We recognise we are often not the best placed organisation to resolve the issue and have positive working relationships with a variety of organisations in the refugee sector and beyond.

'I would like to say Garden is good family because if you have problem then they are helping... when I am here in the Garden I am feel comfortable and I am very happy.'

'The staff, volunteers are amazing, unique, caring and loving. They are always there when you call. They do more than taking pain killers, make me feel calm, loved and even forget about all troubles all you need to do is giving them a shout and before you know it your problem is solved. Wow, wow, wow Growing Together Levenshulme, what a fresh breath of air.'

This year we ran two therapeutic 'Tree of Life' groups to support mental health and build community. 19 of our members completed these groups, using the metaphor of a tree to speak about their lives in ways that were not retraumatising and instead reinforced their skills, qualities, hopes and strengths. These were facilitated by a volunteer clinical psychologist with over 20 years' experience working with asylum seekers. The second group was women-only and used a professional interpreter. Several members reconnected with forgotten skills, many appreciated the opportunity to try meditation, several commented on the benefits of doing the course at the Garden, and others reflected on how they applied the insights to their lives. The majority of the first group showed improvement in mental wellbeing on the Short Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-Being Scale, while the second group saw a very significant improvement in wellbeing score for everyone in the group.

'Before I don't have confidence to talk about my wellbeing but now I'm very better and happy.'

'It was good to share with other women, to see I'm not the only one going through this. It helped me a great deal... The course gave me hope and encouragement, my life isn't always going to be like this.'

'It was very helpful to talk about my qualities and skills and to think of my abilities and what I need for the future'

Our Community

'Chatting, laughing and sharing. Having a good time together like family in the garden'.

People often say they come to the Garden so they can meet people who are in the same situation and know they are understood, supported and feel safe – 'It's our family'. Participants have observed how friendships established at the garden help sustain them longer-term. Over the year we nurtured a sense of community through a culture of project ownership and activities ranging from a welcoming circle to celebrating birthdays. We looked to sustain that sense of being part of a

community where you matter and will be looked out for. Our beneficiaries travel to the Garden from all over Greater Manchester, with active members based in 9 of the 10 Greater Manchester boroughs. Many travel for several hours each way to get to sessions, demonstrating the value GTL has for them.

Whilst there were more opportunities to bring people together at the Garden this year, many members, particularly in the first half of the year, still weren't comfortable travelling so we did our best to bring the Garden to them. We ran Zoom sessions so people could still see their Garden, advise on techniques to look after specific plants, chat to friends and still feel part of the community.

In April, it was decided we should start cooking hot food again. Sitting down to share a meal together, cooked by our members from freshly harvested vegetables, has brought much joy and helped cement the sense of community, as well as helping with food poverty. In February we provided food hygiene training to 17 of our regular cooks.

We scaled back our usual events to open our site to the local community due to ongoing limitations of numbers of people on site, but we were able to go ahead with celebrations, including a Spring party, attracting 48 members, and our end of year party, with 84 people enjoying singing, dancing, a free shop and a feast. Members look forward to these events which celebrate our Garden and strengthen our community. A highlight of the year has to be our summer trip, where 88 of our members travelled to Edale, shared an elaborate picnic, enjoyed the sunshine, explored the peaks, and were introduced to accessible countryside that most had not been to before.

When I first came to the Garden, 'I felt very alone and depressed. I have enjoyed time and warm food and many friends (men and women from different countries)... The atmosphere really changed my mood. Just now I think nearly 10 years I started to come to Garden.'

'The Garden is my second home to relax, to chat with friends, and I am getting a lot of support.'

The organisation

We have continued to ensure inclusive, participant-led decision-making structures underpin the project. Participants have had a strong voice in project direction through engaging in our well-attended Steering Group meetings, currently comprising meetings at each of the three gardening sessions across a week, supplemented by a Zoom meeting to maximise participation. This year, through the Steering Group, members refined the overall aims of the organisation, planned trips and identified training needs, and progressed plans to build a new kitchen and prayer space. Members also led decisions to inform our evolving risk assessments and Covid-19 protocols.

We have been very happy to welcome five new volunteers who have brought a range of skills and energised our team. Following a drive to increase the representation of people with lived experience and to provide progression opportunities for our members, we welcomed one of our members to our gardening volunteer team. Other participants expressed an interest in sharing their skills, and we have been very lucky to have another project member, an experienced artist and teacher, delivering extremely popular art classes at the Garden. Both these individuals have brought significant insights and benefits to the project.

Having benefited significantly from having our first paid post, we have started to fundraise for a part-time Project Coordinator to support and manage our volunteer team and oversee organisational administration and logistics so we can better look after our volunteers and make the most of their

skills, whilst freeing up time and resources to support our members and focus on project development.

Speaking Out

In a political environment that is increasingly hostile to asylum seekers, and with our members enduring lengthy waits on decisions, highly unsuitable housing provision, threats of detention and deportation and a raft of Hostile Environment policies impacting every aspect of their lives, many have wanted to speak out and have their voices heard. We have had a presence at rallies opposing the hostile environment and events protesting the Government's 'anti-refugee' laws. We promoted opportunities to engage with these processes through other organisations and signed up to local and national joint statements to oppose these damaging proposals and demonstrate solidarity.

Financial Review

Income in the 2022-23 year came in the form of grants and donations, with continued success through crowdfunding.

During the financial year, income from grants and donations totalled £50,131 and spending totalled £56,046, resulting in a loss for the year of £5,915. On the 31st March 2023, we had £15,015 available in the bank, of which £10,000 were unrestricted reserves.

This was the first year we were fully open after our closures during the Covid-19 pandemic. Having spent £3,913 on busfares in 2021-22, as we re-opened we spent £12,038 on busfares in 2022-23; we also distributed £7,711 to participants through Urgent Need Fund payments, phone credit and travel costs to access foodbanks. We secured funding to continue employing our sole part-time employee (Support Manager) - in 2022-23 we paid her £18,054.

We improved the garden by building new raised beds and renovating our wildlife pond - we spent £4,203 on materials for these projects. We secured funding to improve access for volunteers by paying for taxis to/from the garden for those unable to use the bus due to disability and provided money for volunteers to buy waterproofs for sessions (totalling £2,844); we also organised two events for our participants - a Summer trip to the Peak District and a Winter Party at the garden (totalling £1,827)

Due to the combination of routine costs (running sessions) returning to pre-pandemic levels and the new costs associated with our casework (Urgent Need Fund and staff costs), our spending was significantly more than in any previous year, reflecting the expanded scope, work and support to beneficiaries of the charity. To enable this, GTL successfully raised sufficient funding to cover these costs. We made a slight loss, as we had live projects at the start of the year for which we had received funds in 2021-22.

We anticipate running at costs higher than this year in the coming year and into the future, as we are planning to recruit a second employee, meaning that additional fundraising is required in future years.

GTL maintained its cash reserves at £10,000 (approximately 3 months of bare minimum operating costs), which is adequately covered by the funds available at the year end.

Accounts have been prepared on a cash basis, using the Charity Commission standard Receipt and Payments CC16a form (see attached). GTL is not required to account on an accruals basis, or to be audited as it is a small organisation. Additionally, GTL is not required to file a tax return as it is recognised as a charity by HMRC.

Due to having exceeded the £25,000 income threshold, GTL's accounts for 2022-23 have been independently examined by Owen Hewson, who found no material matters of concern (examination report dated 4/11/2023).

Profit & Loss 01/04/2022 - 31/03/2023

INCOME AND SPENDING			
INCOME			
	2022-23		2021-22
Donations	1860	Donations (CAFdonate)	2462
Allen Lane	7000	Spotlight (Oglesby Charitable Trust)	5000
A.R.M. grant (unrestricted)	7466	Awards For All	1000
Awards for All	10000	Peter Kershaw Trust	0
Souter CT	5000	Arnold Clark	2000
OCT Winter (unrestricted)	1500	Charity Service	1000
Grant: Society of the Holy Innocent Jesus	10000	Unicorn	3000
Grant: Ashworth CT	5005	Network for Social Change	1000
Grant (unrestricted): Volunteer wellbeing	1500	Volunteer Expenses Fund	7178
Grant: Volunteer Expenses	800	GM Mental Wellbeing	920
		Albert Hunt Trust	2960
			1000
		Oglesby Charitable	1500
			0

		Trust	
		Autotrader	1000
		Survivors of Torture	3000
			5552
	Total 50131	Total	0
SPENDING			
	2022-23		2021-22
busfares	12038	busfares	3913
lunch	4734	lunch	1958
gardening materials	4203	gardening materials	660
rent	553	rent/insurance	643
volunteer expenses	2844	volunteer travel expenses	935
stationery	1932	stationery	746
infrastructure	662	infrastructure (clearing new plot, building maintenance)	5732
UNF essentials	5020	Urgent Need Fund essentials	4984
UNF FB travel	2595	travel to foodbanks	2665
UNF food	0	food parcels	818
UNF phone credit	96	phone credit	223
vol training	420	external training	1737
gifts for participants	766	gifts for participants	334
PPE	303	PPE	364
Paid staff	18054	Paid staff	1769
Trips/events	1827		2
			4340
	Total 56046	Total	3

	2022-23		2021-22
Surplus for the Year	-5915		12117

Statement of Assets and Liabilities at the Year End (31st March 2023)

Cash Funds	Amount
Current account	15015

Assets retained for GTL's own use	Current value (optional)
Classroom space	7000
Polytunnels	4500

Liabilities	Amount due (optional)
None	n/a

Notes to the financial statements:

All figures are rounded to the nearest pound.

A loss was made in the year 2022-23 as funds received in the previous financial year continued to be spent in the year 2022-23.

The value of GTL's classroom/workshop building (paid for during 2015-17), is retained within GTL's assets as £7000; the value of GTL's polytunnels (including a large one paid for during 2021-22) is retained within GTL's assets as £4500.

This is a true record of the income and expenditure of Growing Together Levenshulme for the period stated above.

Closing words

To give the last word to one of our members:

Coming in the Garden!

I'm waiting for the day of Tuesday.

When it's Tuesday I wake up early for coming there, I'm excited.

When I come I feel good, and the smile is coming!

When you see the vegetables and the flowers

The birds sometimes are singing!!

And in the kitchen the cooks, nice smell of the food.

When I come to the Garden my mind comes good,

We have air fresh, friendly place, we have each other.'

This report was approved by the trustees and signed on their behalf.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Jaqui Cotton', written in a cursive style.

Jaqui Cotton (Chair), 5/11/2023

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Tom Spencer', written in a cursive style.

Tom Spencer (Treasurer), 5/11/2023



CHARITY COMMISSION
FOR ENGLAND AND WALES

Charity Name	No (if any)
Living Together Levenshulme	1166420

Receipts and payments accounts

CC16a

For the period from	Period start date	To	Period end date
	1/4/2022		31/3/2023

Section A Receipts and payments

	Unrestricted funds	Restricted funds	Endowment funds	Total funds	Last year
	to the nearest £	to the nearest £	to the nearest £	to the nearest £	to the nearest £
A1 Receipts					
Grants	10,466	37,805	-	48,271	53,058
Donations	1,860	-	-	1,860	2,462
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
Sub total (Gross income for AR)	12,326	37,805	-	50,131	55,520
A2 Asset and investment sales, (see table).					
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
Sub total	-	-	-	-	-
Total receipts	12,326	37,805	-	50,131	55,520
A3 Payments					
workshops sessions	5,497	16,547		22,044	7,228
Volunteer expenses	915	1,929		2,844	935
Insurance/Rent	-	553		553	643
Stationery	254	1,678		1,932	746

Infrastructure	502	160		662	5,732
Marketing/fundraising/outreach				-	-
Training		420		420	1,737
Urgent Need Fund	3,585	4,126		7,711	8,690
Staff costs	4,187	13,868		18,054	17,692
Events	1,827			1,827	
Sub total	16,768	39,279	-	56,046	43,403

A4 Asset and investment purchases, (see table)					
Polytunnel purchase				-	
	-	-	-	-	
Sub total	-	-	-	-	-

Total payments	16,768	39,279	-	56,046	43,403
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Net of receipts/(payments)	- 4,442	- 1,474	-	- 5,915	12,117
A5 Transfers between funds	-	-	-	-	-
A6 Cash funds last year end	14,265	6,665	-	20,930	8,813
Cash funds this year end	9,823	5,191	-	15,015	20,930

Section B Statement of assets and liabilities at the end of the period

Categories	Details	Unrestricted funds to nearest £	Restricted funds to nearest £	Endowment funds to nearest £
B1 Cash funds	Current account	-	5,191	-
	Reserves	9,823	-	-
		-	-	-
	Total cash funds	9,823	5,191	-
	(agree balances with receipts and payments account(s))	OK	OK	OK

	Details	Unrestricted funds to nearest £	Restricted funds to nearest £	Endowment funds to nearest £
B2 Other monetary assets		-	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-

	Details	Fund to which asset belongs	Cost (optional)	Current value (optional)
B3 Investment assets			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-



	Details	Fund to which asset belongs	Cost (optional)	Current value (optional)
B4 Assets retained for the charity's own use	Classroom space	Unrestricted	-	7,000
	Polytunnels	Unrestricted	-	4,500
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-

		-	-
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B5 Liabilities

Details	Fund to which liability relates	Amount due (optional)	When due (optional)
		-	
		-	
		-	
		-	
		-	

Signed by one or two trustees on behalf of all the trustees

Signature	Print Name	Date of approval
	Tom Spencer	5/10/23
	Jaqui Cotton	7/10/2023



Section A Independent Examiner's Report

**Report to the trustees/
members of** Growing Together Levenshulme

**On accounts for the year
ended** 31/03/2023 **Charity no
(if any)** 1166420

Set out on pages 1-2
(remember to include the page numbers of additional sheets)

I report to the trustees on my examination of the accounts of the above charity ("the Trust") for the year ended 31/03/2023.

**Responsibilities and
basis of report** As the charity trustees of the Trust, 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 section 145 of the 2011 Act and in carrying out my examination, I have followed the applicable Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 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 which gives me cause to believe that in, any material respect:

- accounting records were not kept in accordance with section 130 of the Act or
- the accounts do not accord with the accounting records

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

Signed: Owen Hewson **Date:** 04/11/2023

Name: Owen Hewson

**Relevant professional
qualification(s) or body
(if any):**

Address: 10 Vernon Street
Manchester
M169JP

Only complete if the examiner needs to highlight matters of concern (see CC32, Independent examination of charity accounts: directions and guidance for examiners).

Give here brief details of any items that the examiner wishes to disclose.

No matters of concern to report.

GROWING TOGETHER LEVENSHULME

England & Wales - Charity number 1166420

Accounts

Growing Together Levenshulme

Trustees Report and Financial Statements for year ending 31st March 2022

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Legal and Administrative Details

Charity Number: 1166420

Trustees:

Jacqueline Cotton, Chair
Tom Spencer, Treasurer
Graham Kayes, Secretary
Augusta Ward
Nicola Scott
Shamim Afshan
Alice Nicolay

Registered Address: 98 Burnage Lane, Manchester, M19 2NG

Bankers: CAF Bank, 25 Kings Hill Avenue, Kings Hill, West Mailing, Kent, ME19 4JQ.

Trustees report for the year ended 31st March 2022

The Board of Trustees submit their annual report and the financial statements of Growing Together Levenshulme (GTL) for the year ended 31st March 2022.

Growing Together Levenshulme, informally known as ‘the Garden’, is a large, resilient community of asylum seekers and refugees centred around our thriving allotment site in Levenshulme, Manchester. Therapeutic gardening sessions are complemented by informed and well-networked support. We promote vegan-organic, sustainable horticulture principles and nurture a supportive community. We welcome people from across Greater Manchester to our Garden, to give and access support and to create a beautiful, relaxing space to enjoy together.

History, Structure and Governance

Growing Together was set up in 2011 as a partnership between Revive (an organisation supporting refugees and asylum seekers) and Highfield Eco-Allotment Project. It was initially a project within Revive before maturing into an organisation in its own right. The project has run consistently since 2011 and became a charity in 2016. Growing Together Levenshulme was registered by the Charity Commission as a Charitable Incorporated Organisation on 7th April 2016.

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Growing Together Levenshulme is committed to working with marginalised communities, offering access to a community allotment to groups usually unable to take advantage of such opportunities. This year, we have met our objectives primarily through the provision of free therapeutic gardening sessions and a range of comprehensive support to asylum seekers and refugees living in Greater Manchester.

This short video gives a flavour of the project <https://youtu.be/Z0tRgjevT7Y>

2021 - 2022 ~ An overview of the past year at the Garden

This year it has been lovely seeing people gradually return to the Garden to the warmest of welcomes. We have developed our allotment plot and maintained a continuity of support to all our members. We have continued to offer a combination of remote and onsite activities and support, and to facilitate our members' active involvement in GTL's development.

Over the year we have seen a step-change in all aspects of GTL:

- our **structure** has gone from being entirely volunteer-run to having our first paid worker
- our **scope** has expanded from running two gardening sessions per week and providing limited support outside of sessions, to running three gardening sessions per week, regular online sessions and providing through-the-week remote support
- our **depth of engagement** with our participants has increased through the provision of holistic person-centred support.

94 individuals accessed a range of holistic support in person, over the phone or online. 55 of these were in contact on at least a fortnightly basis.

We welcomed 17 new people to the project.

71 different people attended in-person sessions

120 gardening sessions were held with an average of 19 people attending each week (less than pre-Covid times due to group sizes being restricted and Covid prevalence).

14 gardening sessions had 10 or more attendees, with 18 people attending more than 20 gardening sessions over the year.

Evolving the project against a backdrop of the Covid-19 pandemic

At the start of this financial year, in April 2021, we reopened the gardening sessions fully. This followed more limited opening to those local enough to walk or cycle there the previous year. We also added a third gardening session to enable group sizes to remain low, enabling our more vulnerable or fearful members to feel confident returning. We encouraged people to return to the Garden when they felt safe to do so, and continued to provide a range of extensive remote support and online sessions to those not yet able to attend. As a gardening project with significant open space, many began returning to the Garden before most other organisations were able to open. During this period, we saw many vulnerable people who had no other sources of support.

We were able to sustain the gardening sessions for most of the year, although throughout January 2022, in response to soaring Omicron rates locally and risks associated with public transport, we temporarily restricted the project to those who could walk/cycle to the Garden. We supported our members to keep informed and safe during the pandemic, distributed hand sanitiser and masks as needed and provided information and reassurance around getting vaccinated. Due to limitations on group sizes, we didn't initially take on new referrals, and began welcoming new people again in July 2021.

We undertook extensive regular consultation with members throughout the year around how to manage sessions as safely as possible. Members led decisions to inform risk assessments and protocols which evolved in response to the changing prevalence of Covid-19 cases locally, government and NHS guidelines, and members preferences and confidence. This included whether/when to open the indoor space, arrangements around mask wearing and social distancing, the decision to give pre-prepared lunch bags rather than cook food, and decisions around gradually increasing the maximum numbers of people at each session. All our participants were at heightened vulnerability to Covid-19 and disproportionately affected by the restrictions and isolation associated with lockdowns. Many of our members were extremely cautious and fearful about returning to the Garden and many had health conditions or other vulnerabilities. We erred on the side of caution and maintained Covid-19 procedures even as they were lifted elsewhere to ensure that those most vulnerable could still feel safe accessing the project.

*'Covid has been very sad and stressful. When the Garden was closed it was very depressing. When we heard the Garden was open it was WOW!
The Garden helps us with our mental health. I was very happy knowing that the Garden was open again.
The Garden has been there for us all through lockdown even when it wasn't open.
Without coming to the Garden, I am lost.'*

Our Garden

'I see the Garden, I can breathe'

The Garden is the heart of our project and this year it is looking better than ever, having received a lot of care and attention. Members have enjoyed seeing their Garden flourish, their favourite plants grow and flowers brighten the space. We often hear people comment that just being in the physical space of the Garden eases stress and depression and provides that breathing space that helps them get through the week.

Our favourite crops this year have included rugari, sweet potatoes, green beans and sweetcorn, with members harvesting crops and taking them home to cook. We enjoyed planting, tending crops, building new raised beds and growing food people missed from

back home. Building on plans from the previous year's Steering Groups, we bought a giant polytunnel which brought useful well-ventilated indoor space as well as lots of scope to plant more vegetables. A highlight has to be our new path, made from paving stones that were unearthed when clearing the new plot, designed and built by members with great skill and artistry.

Many of our members are highly skilled but due to their immigration status, have limited scope to use their skills. The Garden has provided opportunities to develop and share skills and take on leadership roles, which has empowered members, brought benefits to mental health, and fostered resilience and agency. We regularly promote project ownership, that this is our members' Garden, a space where they can choose what activities they want to do whether it be joining volunteer-led sessions, leading activities themselves or working independently. Members have commented on feeling grounded through connecting to the soil, finding respite through being in green space and finding solace in their Garden.

'We come to the Garden to meet new friends. It helps us physically and mentally. We come to enjoy the quiet and the nature. It's good seeing different plants and growing things. When we come, it's like family here. It takes us away from our problems.'

Supporting our Members

Over the past year, we sustained the increased reach and depth of support that we had provided to our members during lockdown. We maintained contact with all our existing members throughout the year, including those who were moved to hotels and accommodation out of the area and signposted them to local support, as well as supporting our new members.

- At least weekly contact and intensive support was provided over prolonged periods of time to 6 members, often with input from multiple members of the People Support team during periods of crisis or difficulty
- Weekly contact and a significant level of support was provided to a further 17 people.
- Fortnightly contact with support routinely provided was delivered to 32 members.
- A further 12 members received monthly contact/support
- 17 people wanted occasional contact - often photos from the Garden and an occasional phone call, and would contact us if/when they needed anything else
- 10 adult children who have previously been to the Garden in their own right have this year primarily been supported through contact with their parents with some on occasion reaching out to us directly.

Through regular check-in calls with all our members and in-person contact at the Garden we have provided emotional and practical support on a range of issues including support with mental health, access to healthcare, debt issues, homelessness and inadequate housing, family relationships, lack of access to immigration advice, access to college and navigating the transition to refugee status including securing housing, benefits and employment. We regularly refer members to specialist support such as other refugee sector organisations, counselling, housing and healthcare. This year we increased our focus on supporting members to access legal representation, helping them get their evidence together to enable credible referrals to solicitors.

We have seen most of our members, including those with refugee status, struggling to meet their basic needs due to the combined impacts of austerity, the hostile environment and the unequal impact of Covid-19. We have referred members to foodbanks, community grocers, and organised deliveries of food parcels where no other support was available. We have referred our destitute members to the Greater Manchester Migrant Destitution Fund and to the Red Cross, as well as facilitating access to our small Urgent Need Fund for exceptional or crisis needs.

Our approach is to stand in solidarity with our members and advocate in partnership with them. We also foster a culture of peer support as often the best person to offer advice or support is someone who has faced a similar situation and is happy to share their expertise. Participants comment that whilst they might go to other organisations around a specific need, they come to the Garden every week, often for years. We have built deep, trusting relationships and this trust spreads quickly to new participants. We are therefore well-placed to assess need and signpost to support. Over this year we have often been people's first place to turn in a crisis.

A major theme of recent Steering Groups has been for GTL to provide more input around mental health. This year we gained a new volunteer (a clinical psychologist with over 20 years' experience working with asylum seekers and refugees) who has worked with us to pilot a therapeutic activity group based on the Tree of Life methodology. Through this, participants drew inspiration from the Garden and used the metaphor of a tree to speak about their lives in ways that were not retraumatising and instead reinforced their skills, qualities, hopes and strengths. This pilot was successful with two further groups planned.

Our Community

'Chatting, laughing and sharing. Having a good time together like family in the garden'.

People often say they come to the Garden so they can meet people who are in the same situation, and know they are understood, supported and feel safe - 'It's our family'. Participants have observed how friendships established at the garden help sustain them longer-term. We nurtured a sense of community through a culture of project ownership and activities ranging from a welcoming circle to celebrating birthdays. We looked to sustain that sense of being part of a community where you matter and will be looked out for.

Whilst there were more opportunities to bring people together at the Garden this year, many members still weren't comfortable travelling so we did our best to bring the Garden to them. We ran Zoom sessions fortnightly throughout the year so people could still see their Garden, advise on techniques to look after specific plants, chat to friends and still feel part of the community. This was supplemented by a Zoom Chilli Club, where we delivered supplies to people's homes and people connected over Zoom and WhatsApp to see each other's plants and collectively troubleshoot any issues. We enjoyed dancing and singing at a Zoom end of year party. Almost all of our members joined a WhatsApp broadcast list where we shared photos of the Garden to keep people's spirits up.

The pandemic and limits on numbers meant we weren't able to run our usual events opening up our site to the local community. However, we were able to get out and about and ran scaled back versions of our 'giving back' events, where members nominate and give back to organisations that have shown them welcome. In April, a

group of our members visited Revive to build new raised beds in their outdoor space, helped woodchip their paths and sowed sweetcorn. We also collaborated with Europaia to provide space at the Garden for a group of Roma women to meet to connect and grow the herb lovage.

In June, we created a beautiful shoe box model of the Garden as part of the dolls house project for refugee week. In August, we welcomed a herbalist to the Garden to teach us about some of the benefits of the herbs and plants we grow, and the Kindling Trust visited us to teach tree grafting techniques. For several people this brought back positive memories of learning these skills in school. In September, members loved working with Joel Chima to create this video:

<https://www.facebook.com/GrowingTogetherLevenshulme/videos/5180231245322539>

The organisation

This year, GTL scaled up from being a volunteer organisation, set up as an employer, and employed its first member of staff. Having a paid member of staff has enhanced the quality and extent of the support we offer. They have brought stability, passion and expertise to the organisation as well as skills and insight from their own experience as a refugee. We said goodbye to a couple of volunteers who left Manchester and welcomed four new volunteers. We ran a team building day, volunteers underwent first aid training, and we started work on encouraging participants to become volunteers. We also welcomed two new Trustees - one with an asylum seeker background and another who is well connected to refugee communities through her work.

An overriding principle of GTL is to be member-led. We have continued to ensure inclusive, participant-led decision-making structures underpin the project. Participants have had a strong voice in project direction through engaging in our well attended Steering Group meetings. As we haven't been able to bring large groups together this year, Steering Groups have comprised mini-Steering groups at each of the gardening sessions supplemented by a Zoom meeting to maximise participation.

Speaking Out

In a political environment that is increasingly hostile to asylum seekers, our members have wanted to have their voices heard. GTL ran a Zoom event to listen to members thoughts on the then Nationality and Borders Bill and submitted a response to the government's consultation on this Bill. Members attended a multi-agency event to raise awareness about the impact of the proposed changes and options moving forward. We promoted opportunities to engage with this process through other organisations and signed up to local and national joint statements to oppose the damaging proposals and demonstrate solidarity.

Financial Review

Income in the 2021-22 year came in the form of grants and donations, with continued success through crowdfunding.

During the financial year, income from grants and donations totalled £55,520 and spending totalled £43,403, resulting in a surplus for the year of £12,117. On the 31st March 2022, we had £20,930 in the bank.

Our spending was significantly affected by the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic: having spent no money at all on busfares in 2020-21 due to closing the garden, we spent £3913 in 2021-22 as we re-opened; we also distributed £8690 to participants through Urgent Need Fund payments, food parcels, phone credit and travel costs to access foodbanks. In October 2020 we recruited a freelance worker to increase capacity to provide support to participants. In 2021-22 we registered as an employer and secured funding to pay her as PAYE - in 2021-22 we paid her £17,692.

Due to the combination of routine costs (running sessions) returning towards pre-pandemic levels and new costs (Urgent Need Fund and staff costs), our spending was significantly more than in any previous year, reflecting the expanded scope, work and support to beneficiaries of the charity. To enable this, GTL successfully raised significantly more funding than in any previous year.

We anticipate running at costs similar to this year (or higher) in the coming year, meaning that this new level of fundraising is required in future years.

GTL increased its cash reserves to £10,000 (approximately 3 months of bare minimum operating costs), which is adequately covered by the funds available at the year end.

Accounts have been prepared on a cash basis, using the Charity Commission standard Receipt and Payments CC16a form (see attached). GTL is not required to account on an accruals basis, or to be audited as it is a small organisation. Additionally, GTL is not required to file a tax return as it is recognised as a charity by HMRC.

Due to having exceeded the £25,000 income threshold, GTL's accounts for 2021-22 have been independently examined. The examiner found no issues of material concern and concluded that GTL's accounting records were:

- kept in accordance with section 130 of the Charities Act 2011
- in accord with the accounts

Notes to the financial statements:

All figures are rounded to the nearest pound.

A surplus was made in the year 2021-22 as funds received in the financial year will continue to be spent in the year 2022-23.

The value of GTL's classroom/workshop building (paid for during 2015-17), is retained within GTL's assets as £7500; the value of GTL's polytunnels (including a large one paid for during 2021-22) is retained within GTL's assets as £5000.

This is a true record of the income and expenditure of Growing Together Levenshulme for the period stated above.

Profit & Loss 01/04/2021 - 31/03/2022

INCOME AND SPENDING			
INCOME			
	2021-22		2020-21
Donations (CAFdonate)	2462	Donations (mydonate)	2836
Spotlight (Oglesby Charitable Trust)	5000	Spotlight	5000
Awards For All	10000	Forever Manchester	3100
Peter Kershaw Trust	2000	Aviva Community Fund	988
Arnold Clark	1000	Comic Relief Paid Role	4000
Charity Service	3000	Barrow Cadbury Paid Role	5000
Unicorn	1000	ARM	3395
Network for Social Change	7178		
Volunteer Expenses Fund	920		
GM Mental Wellbeing	2960		
Albert Hunt Trust	1000		
Oglesby Charitable Trust	15000		
Autotrader	1000		
Survivors of Torture	3000		
Total	55520	Total	24319
SPENDING			
	2021-22		2020-21
busfares	3913	busfares	0
lunch	1958	lunch	220
gardening materials	660	gardening materials	776
rent/insurance	643	rent/insurance	480
volunteer travel expenses	935	volunteer travel expenses	344
stationery	746	stationery	1044
infrastructure	5732	infrastructure	2066
UNF essentials	4984	Urgent Need Fund essentials	7286
travel to foodbanks	2665	travel to foodbanks	519
food parcels	818	food parcels	1801
phone credit	223	phone credit	5844
external training	1737	external training	318
gifts for participants	334	gifts for participants	423
PPE	364	PPE	768
Paid staff	17692	Paid staff	9156
		translation/interpretation	255
Total	43403	Total	31300
	2021-22		2020-

			21
Surplus for the Year	12117		-6981

Statement of Assets and Liabilities at the Year End (31st March 2022)

Cash Funds	Amount
Current account	20930

Assets retained for GTL's own use	Current value (optional)
Classroom space	7500
Polytunnels	5000

Liabilities	Amount due (optional)
None	n/a

Closing Poem

To give the last word to one of our new members:

Growing Together

*I found a place in Lev
 where I get to call
 random people friends.
 though we are from different walks of life
 with different beliefs and status
 in the garden, it doesn't matter
 what matters is we are there to support
 to be an encouragement to one another.
 the garden gives us hope
 and it allows us to grow together
 not only tend to the garden
 but to each other.*


*The volunteers with their smiley faces
welcome us every time
They help us to learn new things
they support and encourage us
they share our happiness and struggles
and we leave the place renewed
though our lives might be a bleak outside
in the garden that all disappears
and we are filled with a new hope
in the same way as the flowers bloom in the garden
Or as a new plant springs up
Our life might be just starting
but our future is just like the garden
full of new beginnings and the future is ours.*

This report was approved by the trustees and signed on their behalf on



Jaqui Cotton (Chair)

18/10/2022



Tom Spencer (Treasurer)

18/10/2022



CHARITY COMMISSION
FOR ENGLAND AND WALES

Charity Name	No (if any)
Growing Together Levenshulme	1166420

Receipts and payments accounts

For the period from	Period start date	To	Period end date
	1/4/2021		31/3/2022

Section A Receipts and payments

	Unrestricted funds to the nearest £	Restricted funds to the nearest £	Endowment funds to the nearest £	Total funds to the nearest £
A1 Receipts				
Grants	21,000	32,058	-	53,058
Donations	2,462	-	-	2,462
	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-
Sub total (Gross income for AR)	23,462	32,058	-	55,520
A2 Asset and investment sales, (see table).				
	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-
Sub total	-	-	-	-
Total receipts	23,462	32,058	-	55,520
A3 Payments				
workshops sessions	1,825	5,403		7,228
Volunteer expenses	251	684		935
Insurance/Rent	-	643		643
Stationery	427	319		746

Marketing/fundraising/outreach	-	-		-
Training	1,385	352		1,737
Urgent Need Fund	4,343	4,347		8,690
Staff costs	3,317	14,375		17,692
Sub total	11,548	26,123	-	37,671
A4 Asset and investment purchases, (see table)				
Polytunnel purchase	2,145	3,587		5,732
	-	-	-	-
Sub total	2,145	3,587	-	5,732
Total payments	13,693	29,710	-	43,403
Net of receipts/(payments)	9,769	2,348	-	12,117
A5 Transfers between funds	-	-	-	-
A6 Cash funds last year end	4,496	4,317	-	8,813
Cash funds this year end	14,265	6,665	-	20,930

Section B Statement of assets and liabilities at the end of the period

Categories	Details	Unrestricted funds to nearest £	Restricted funds to nearest £
B1 Cash funds	Current account	4,265	6,665
	Reserves	10,000	-
		-	-
	Total cash funds	14,265	6,665
	(agree balances with receipts and payments account(s))	OK	OK
		Unrestricted funds	Restricted funds

	Details	to nearest £	to nearest £
B2 Other monetary assets		-	-
		-	-
		-	-
		-	-
		-	-
		-	-



	Details	Fund to which asset belongs	Cost (optional)
B3 Investment assets			-
			-
			-
			-
			-

	Details	Fund to which asset belongs	Cost (optional)
B4 Assets retained for the charity's own use	Classroom space	Unrestricted	-
	Polytunnels	Unrestricted	-
			-
			-
			-
			-
			-
			-
			-

B5 Liabilities

Details	Fund to which liability relates	Amount due (optional)
		-
		-
		-
		-
		-

Signed by one or two trustees on behalf of all the trustees

Signature	Print Name
	Tom Spencer
	Jaqui Cotton

CC16a



Last year

to the nearest £

21,483
2,836
-
-
-
-
-
-
24,319

-
-

24,319

4,509
344
480
1,044

318
15,450
9,156
31,301

-

31,301

-	6,982
	-
	-
-	6,982



**Endowment
funds
to nearest £**

-
-
-
-

OK

**Endowment
funds**

to nearest £

-
-
-
-
-
-

**Current value
(optional)**

-
-
-
-
-

**Current value
(optional)**

7,500
5,000
-
-
-
-
-
-
-

**When due
(optional)**

Date of
approval

18/10/2022
20/10/2022



Section A Independent Examiner's Report

Report to the trustees/ members of Growing Together Levenshulme

On accounts for the year ended 31/03/2022 **Charity no (if any)** 1166420

Set out on pages 1-2
(remember to include the page numbers of additional sheets)

I report to the trustees on my examination of the accounts of the above charity ("the Trust") for the year ended 31/03/2019.

Responsibilities and basis of report As the charity trustees of the Trust, 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 section 145 of the 2011 Act and in carrying out my examination, I have followed the applicable Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 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 which gives me cause to believe that in, any material respect:

- accounting records were not kept in accordance with section 130 of the Act or
- the accounts do not accord with the accounting records

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

Signed: Jennifer-Lynn Crawford **Date:** 16.10.2022

Name: Jennifer-Lynn Crawford

Relevant professional qualification(s) or body (if any):

Address: 37 Oakdale Avenue
Harrogate HG1 2JP



Section B

Disclosure

Only complete if the examiner needs to highlight matters of concern (see CC32, Independent examination of charity accounts: directions and guidance for examiners).

Give here brief details of any items that the examiner wishes to disclose.

GROWING TOGETHER LEVENSHULME

England & Wales - Charity number 1166420

Accounts

Growing Together Levenshulme

Trustees Report and Financial Statements for year ending 31st March 2021

Content

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Legal and Administrative Details

Charity Number: 1166420

Trustees:

Jacqueline Cotton, Chair
Tom Spencer, Treasurer
Graham Kayes, Secretary
Gill Bradley
Roo Wilkins
Augusta Ward
Nicola Scott

Registered Address: 161 Hamilton Road, Longsight, Manchester, M13 OPQ

Bankers: CAF Bank, 25 Kings Hill Avenue, Kings Hill, West Mailing, Kent, ME19 4JQ.

Trustees report for the year ended 31st March 2021

The Board of Trustees submit their annual report and the financial statements of Growing Together Levenshulme (GTL) for the year ended 31st March 2021.

Growing Together Levenshulme, informally known as 'the Garden', is a large, resilient community of asylum seekers and refugees from across Greater Manchester who come together through therapeutic gardening sessions to support each other and create beautiful spaces. We run therapeutic horticulture sessions from our community allotment in Levenshulme, Manchester, promoting vegan-organic horticulture principles and providing a community allotment project for marginalised communities.

Mission Statement

Creating a therapeutic horticulture project with disadvantaged groups, particularly refugees and asylum seekers, to build community and networks of solidarity, whilst learning and sharing skills around vegan-organic growing, and creating a beautiful and relaxing garden together.

History, Structure and Governance

Growing Together was set up in 2011 as a partnership between Revive (an organisation supporting refugees and asylum seekers) and Highfield Eco-Allotment Project. It was initially a project within Revive before maturing into an organisation in its own right. The project has run consistently since 2011 and became a charity in 2016. Growing Together Levenshulme was registered by the Charity Commission as a Charitable Incorporated Organisation on 7th April 2016.

Growing Together Levenshulme has historically had no paid staff, and is collaboratively run by a team of volunteers. Operational decisions are made by the Steering Group which comprises volunteers and participants. Volunteers also meet regularly as the Caretakers and People Support Groups to ensure the project runs smoothly, our participants and team are well supported, and the vision of the Steering Group is progressed. In November 2020, we recruited a freelancer to support the work of the volunteer team. Trustees are appointed or reappointed annually at the AGM. The Trustees are ultimately responsible for the governance of the organisation, ensuring it fulfils its legal obligations, carries out activities to fulfil its aims for the public benefit, and oversees strategy and resources.

Risk management: Trustees annually review major risks which Growing Together Levenshulme is exposed to, and identify actions to monitor and minimise the potential impact of these risks.

Public Benefit: When planning activities for the year, the Trustees consider the Charity Commission's guidance on public benefit and are satisfied that our activities meet the principles outlined in that guidance. Growing Together Levenshulme's purposes meet the public benefit requirement in that it provides

identifiable benefits to a sufficient section of the public, defined in relation to membership of a marginalised community.

The objects of GTL are:

- i) To provide facilities for recreation or other leisure time occupation by providing an area for use as a community garden for: therapeutic horticulture; training and support for those persons who have need of such facilities by reason of their youth, age, infirmity, disablement, financial hardship or social and economic circumstances; or for the public at large in the interests of social welfare and with the object of improving the condition of life of said inhabitants.
- ii) To promote for the benefit of the public, the conservation, protection and improvement of the physical and natural environment by promoting biodiversity, vegan-organic growing, healthy lifestyles, permaculture and conservation practices.

Growing Together Levenshulme is committed to working with marginalised communities, offering access to a community allotment to groups usually unable to take advantage of such opportunities. This year, we have met our objectives primarily through the provision of free therapeutic gardening sessions for asylum seekers and refugees living in Greater Manchester.

This short video gives a flavour of the project <https://youtu.be/Z0tRgJevT7Y>

2020-21. Reorienting GTL to meet our members needs and sustain our community during the pandemic

For the last ten years, GTL has run two gardening sessions per week and provided limited phone and in-person support outside these sessions, through a team of committed volunteers. Just prior to the start of this financial year, in March 2020, we closed the physical space of the Garden to safeguard the health and wellbeing of our members, and to comply with NHS guidance on Covid-19. Over the following weeks, we phoned everyone who had attended the project over the past year. We asked them what they most needed and how we could best offer support whilst the project was physically closed.

Many people were fearful and isolated. Others were concerned about how they would manage without the food and travel expenses they had relied upon from various community groups that had now closed. Many of our members were already dealing with anxiety, depression and other mental or physical health conditions at significant levels. They now found themselves facing increased vulnerability to the psychological and physical impacts of the Corona virus. Others were more vulnerable due to being homeless or sofa surfing, unable to self-isolate or keep themselves safe. Others were deeply worried about friends or family who they left behind in their country. Some with no recourse to public funds as a condition of their stay had lost their jobs and become destitute. Others had been destitute for years. Many were becoming increasingly isolated and vulnerable as services and drop-ins across the sector were closed or curtailed, and progress on immigration cases stalled.

We responded by offering a range of flexible support options. 82 of our members wanted some form of support:

- 63 wanted regular phonecalls and support, usually calls on a weekly basis.
- An additional 13 were adult children of members, who were also regular attendees of the Garden in their own right. Most didn't want regular calls but received occasional support and reached out to us as needed.
- 6 people didn't need regular calls/support, but wanted to keep in touch
- 5 people didn't want support, usually because they had settled in a new area
- 4 people couldn't be reached.

Our volunteer team is divided between Gardening volunteers and People Support volunteers. For some time, our capacity had been overstretched. A combination of increased demand and volunteers also juggling work, family commitments, and Covid challenges led us in November 2020, to recruit a part-time freelancer to supplement the work of our team. We recruited an outstanding individual, a refugee herself, who is hugely enhancing the quality and extent of the support we can offer. She has worked closely with our twelve volunteers to sustain and develop the project.

Throughout the year we underwent extensive consultation with members about how/when to reopen safely, and put in place risk assessments and action plans to enable us to re-open once safe to do so, including no access to indoor space and giving out snacks rather than cooked food. Whilst we are an outdoor project and could mitigate many of the risks onsite, our main concern was that our members travel from nine of the ten boroughs of Greater Manchester, with many taking long journeys comprising two buses to get to the project. Due to the risks associated with public transport, we decided in October '20 to open the Garden just to local participants - those who were able to walk or cycle to the Garden. By the end of the period of this report, we were making plans to imminently open to small groups of up-to 8 people, and also provide an extra day at the Garden to enable up to 24 people a week to attend in small groups. We were also providing regular online activities including a Zoom-in to the Garden, and much more extensive remote support.

Read on for more details and some of our highlights.

Supporting our Members

Over the year, we significantly increased the extent and reach of our support and now provide holistic support outside the Garden to all our members. We sustained contact throughout the year and stepped up during periods of crisis. Our regular calls offered a friendly voice and an opportunity to assess unmet needs, and offer support or referral on as needed. As well as being a listening ear and providing a range of support directly, we have referred people to counselling, legal advice, foodbanks, emergency housing and healthcare. We

have supported our members through crisis and trauma, stood in partnership with them and advocated on their behalf. We maintained contact with our members who were moved to hotels and accommodation out of the area who intensely struggled with isolation and lack of access to support.

We set up a WhatsApp broadcast list to keep participants informed of key advice/info and to send photos of the Garden to keep people's spirits up, social connections alive, and to sustain that sense of being part of a community where you matter and will be looked out for.

Most of our members struggled to meet their basic needs during the pandemic. Many had been impacted by austerity and the hostile environment and had previously relied on free meals at community organisations which all suddenly closed. As well as seeing our asylum-seeking members struggling to survive, it was shocking to see our refugee members needing support with food and bills as prices rocketed and they were unable to travel to cheaper shops. We referred members to foodbanks, community grocers, and organised deliveries of food parcels where no other support was available. We referred our destitute members to the Greater Manchester Migrant Destitution Fund and to Red Cross Destitution Support. We previously had a small Urgent Need Fund, and we expanded the use of this Fund significantly to meet the many and varied crisis needs of our members. We were also able to give all our members phone credit/data on three occasions during lockdown, which helped reduce the isolation many were so impacted by.

Throughout the year we have supported our members to keep informed and safe during the pandemic. We shared information and resources in different languages and updated them as the situation evolved. Our volunteers and their friends made hundreds of quality masks and we sent packs of masks and hand sanitizer to all our members. We also provided information, reassurance and encouragement around getting vaccinated.

Members regularly talk about how grateful they are for the support we offered over lockdown, particularly around easing their depression, stress and isolation, enabling them to keep in touch with friends, and having someone to turn to when there was a problem. Covid-19 has highlighted how many asylum seekers and refugees have insufficient support to meet their needs, especially in times of crisis. Having run weekly sessions for 10 years we have built deep trusting relationships with individuals. We are often people's first place to turn in a crisis, which was evident this year more than ever. Some have said they wouldn't have been alive today without the support of the Garden.

"You are my backbone. There is no other group that is helping me. You call to find out how we are doing, you are looking out for us in this pandemic. It keeps me going. Your help and support, it keeps a smile on my face."

Our Community

'Chatting, laughing and sharing. Having a good time together like family in the garden'.

A major focus for the year was sustaining our community while the Garden was physically closed. People often say they come to the Garden so they can meet people who are in the same situation, and know they are understood, supported and feel safe. We seek to promote a culture of mutual support and community. Participants have observed how friendships established at the garden help sustain them longer-term. Whilst there were fewer opportunities to bring people together at the Garden this year, we did our best to bring the Garden to them.

This was the year that many of us discovered Zoom. A highlight has to be the chilli club. We dropped off supplies so members could grow chilli plants at home, and facilitated Zoom sessions and a WhatsApp group to learn growing techniques and share photos and chilli plant news. So many well nurtured chilli plants and proud gardeners!

We also ran open Zoom sessions so our members could meet, talk and connect with each other. As always, we were inspired by the generosity of spirit, compassion, and capacity to offer each other support that we witnessed from our members, who were themselves under such stress. Our members missed out on the usual trips and parties, but we still managed a Zoom end of year party. With dancing! And following a drive for donations, we were able to send a parcel of gifts to all our members.

By the end of the year we were in the routine of fortnightly Zooms to coincide with in-person sessions as the Garden. This meant that those who weren't yet able to return to in-person sessions could still see the Garden, advise on techniques to look after specific plants, chat to friends and feel more part of the Garden.

'This pandemic, it was good to come together on Zoom. The Garden is doing so good! We are not walking to the Garden but we can see it and our mind is refreshed. Even seeing the road, the gate to the Garden it makes me happy. With depression over lockdown I can't wait to log on to the Garden Zoom. I have other appointments on Zoom where I have to talk about my health but the Garden is different. Here I can just see. It makes me feel happy to see friends.'

Our Garden

'I see the Garden, I can breathe'

Over the past year, the garden flourished despite the challenges, and those participants who were able to attend did an amazing job growing vegetables and building trellises, raised beds, and covered areas. Volunteers also worked hard to sustain the Garden while we were closed. We produced a wide variety of produce with favourites including yellow tomatoes, strawberries, rugari, sweetcorn, and giant sunflowers. Harvested produce would usually go into the

communal meal, but this year we distributed bags of harvested produce to our members.

We had recently expanded our site to take on two neighbouring allotment plots, enabling us to significantly expand our physical space. These needed much clearing and demolition of unsafe structures, including a satisfying day where we hired a digger to clear the plot. Members, through the Steering Group, continued planning for the new plot, including which trees to plant, and deciding on getting a large polytunnel/workspace with space inside for tables and raised beds.

Whilst many of our members have been unable to get the usual therapeutic benefits of being outside in nature, the Zoom tours of the Garden and photos on the WhatsApp list have helped trigger positive memories and emotions and helped sustain members through difficult times.

Building Community Links. Sharing Skills

The pandemic meant we weren't able to run our usual events opening up our site to the local community, and we had to scale back our Giving Back projects helping other community organisations do up their green spaces. However, we were able to facilitate a day of gardening for asylum seekers housed at the Britannia Hotel and shortly after the end of the financial year we visited Revive with a few participants to build new raised beds in their garden. We are also planning a collaboration with Europaia around a group of Roma women meeting at the Garden to grow herbs. Looking back over the year, one of the positive outcomes is the stronger relationships we have built with a range of partner organisations, and we look forward to building on these as things open up.

Leadership and Voice

An overriding principle of GTL is to be member-led. We have continued to ensure inclusive, participant-led decision-making structures underpin the project. Our paid worker is a refugee herself and is well-placed to advocate for the needs and interests of participants. Participants have had a strong voice in project direction through engaging in our well attended Steering Group meetings. These were run slightly differently over the year, combining small in-person meetings, Zoom sessions and individual feedback to enable as many members as possible to participate. Members have increasingly taken the lead in gardening activities, and the collective sense of project ownership has continued and been enhanced.

We have provided opportunities for our Garden and its participants to feature in a range of projects and campaigns to raise the voices of our members, including one of our members speaking at a Social Workers Without Borders event to help train social workers working with people impacted by immigration control.

Getting Our Act Together

We have strengthened how we operate as an organisation, including:

- Restructuring how the people support team works and building better systems for case notes, communication and peer support.
- Recruiting volunteer interpreters for routine translation and sensitive phone calls
- Team training on accessing healthcare, supporting victims of trafficking, and working with interpreters.
- Team training from MIND around working with depression and suicidal thoughts.
- Reviewing Trustee membership and recruiting new trustees to include better representation from the refugee community and other refugee organisations.
- Reviewing the impact of having paid freelance support and options to continue this role in the longer-term rather than just as a pandemic response.

Looking Ahead

Looking into next year, we hope to embed some of the positive organisational changes we have made during the pandemic: to offer a paid employment contract to our freelancer and to scale up from a volunteer organisation to one with a paid employee; to continue to offer and develop a blended approach of remote and onsite activities and support to our members; and to support our members' active involvement in GTL's development.

Financial Review

Income in the 2020-21 year came in the form of grants and donations, with continued success through crowdfunding. During the financial year, income from grants and donations totalled £24,319 and spending totalled £31,300, resulting in a loss for the year of £6,980 (we had made a surplus in both previous years). On the 31st March 2021, we had £8,815 in the bank.

Our spending was significantly affected by Covid-19: we spent no money at all on busfares due to closing the garden but distributed £15,540 to participants through Urgent Need Fund payments, food parcels, phone credit and travel costs to access foodbanks. We spent £768 on PPE for participants. We also added a new budget-line to pay GTL's freelance worker, totalling £9,156, which was covered by Covid response grant funding brought in mid-year.

We are very grateful to our funders, all of whom gave permission for us to change our planned project budgets to allow the spending described above.

We anticipate running at costs similar to this year (or higher) in the coming year, meaning that significant additional funding is required.

GTL holds cash reserves of £3000, which is adequately covered by the funds available at the year end.

Accounts have been prepared on a cash basis, using the Charity Commission standard Receipt and Payments CC16a form (see attached). GTL is not required to account on an accruals basis, or to be audited as it is a small organisation. Additionally, GTL is not required to file a tax return as it is recognised as a charity by HMRC.

Urgent Need Fund payments	7286	Urgent Need Fund payments	983
phone credit	5844		
food parcels	1801		
travel to foodbanks	519		
PPE	768		
translation/interpretation	255		
Paid covid role	9156		
Total	31301	Total	16462
2020-21			
Surplus for the Year	-6980		5089
	2020-21		2019-20
Cash funds at year end	8815		15795

Statement of Assets and Liabilities at the Year End (31st March 2021)

Cash Funds	Amount
Current account	8815

Assets retained for GTL's own use	Current value (optional)
Classroom space	8000
Polytunnels	400

Liabilities	Amount due (optional)
None	n/a

Notes to the financial statements:

All figures are rounded to the nearest pound.

A loss was made in the year 2020-21 as some funds received towards the end of the 2019-20 financial year were continued to be spent in the year 2020-21.

The total value of GTL's classroom/workshop building (paid for during 2015-17), is retained within GTL's assets as £8000.

This is a true record of the income and expenditure of Growing Together Levenshulme for the period stated above.

This report was approved by the trustees and signed on their behalf on 27th July '21

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Jaqui Cotton', written in a cursive style.

Jaqui Cotton (Chair)

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Tom Spencer', written in a cursive style.

Tom Spencer (Treasurer)



Receipts and payments account

For the period from	Period start date 01/04/2020	To
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Section A Receipts and payments

	Unrestricted funds to the nearest £	Restricted funds to the nearest £	Endowment funds to the nearest £
A1 Receipts			
Grants	3,395	18,088	-
Donations	2,836	-	-
	-	-	-
	-	-	-
	-	-	-
	-	-	-
	-	-	-
Sub total (Gross income for AR)	6,231	18,088	-
A2 Asset and investment sales, (see table).			
	-	-	-
	-	-	-
Sub total	-	-	-
Total receipts	6,231	18,088	-
A3 Payments			
workshops sessions	1,104	3,405	-
Volunteer expenses	344		-
Insurance		309	-
Stationery	178	866	-
Rent		171	-
Marketing/fundraising/outreach			-
Training		318	-
Urgent Need Fund	7,449	8,001	-
Staff costs		9,156	-
Sub total	9,075	22,226	-
A4 Asset and investment purchases, (see table)			
	-	-	-
	-	-	-
Sub total	-	-	-
Total payments	9,075	22,226	-
Net of receipts/(payments)	- 2,844	- 4,138	-
A5 Transfers between funds	-	-	-
A6 Cash funds last year end	7,340	8,455	-

<i>Cash funds this year end</i>	4,496	4,317	-
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Section B Statement of assets and liabilities at the end of

Categories	Details	Unrestricted funds to nearest £
B1 Cash funds	Current account	1,496
	Reserves	3,000
		-
	Total cash funds	4,496
	(agree balances with receipts and payments account(s))	OK
B2 Other monetary assets	Details	-
		-
		-
		-
		-
		-
B3 Investment assets	Details	Fund to which asset belongs
B4 Assets retained for the charity's own use	Details	Fund to which asset belongs
	Classroom Space	Unrestricted funds
	Polytunnels	unrestricted funds
B5 Liabilities	Details	Fund to which liability relates

Signed by one or two trustees on behalf of all the trustees

Signature

Print N

<i>TSpencer</i>

Tom Sp

o (if any)
166420

ounts

Period end date
31/03/2021

CC16a



Total funds

Last year

to the nearest £

to the nearest £

21,483	14,980
2,836	6,571
-	
-	
-	
-	
-	
24,319	21,551

-	
-	-
-	-

24,319	21,551
--------	--------

4,509	11,908
344	720
309	263
1,044	296
171	174
-	563
318	1,697
15,450	983
9,156	-
31,301	16,604

-	
-	
-	-

31,301	16,604
--------	--------

- 6,982	4,947
-	-
15,795	-

8,813

4,947

the period

Restricted funds

to nearest £

4,317
-
-
4,317

OK

Endowment funds

to nearest £

-
-
-
-

OK

Restricted funds

to nearest £

-
-
-
-
-
-

Endowment funds

to nearest £

-
-
-
-
-
-

Cost (optional)

-
-
-
-
-

Current value (optional)

-
-
-
-
-

Cost (optional)

-
-
-
-
-
-
-
-
-

Current value (optional)

8,000
400
-
-
-
-
-
-
-

Amount due (optional)

-
-

When due (optional)

	-	
	-	
	-	

lame	Date of approval
encer	27/07/2021