

Growing Together Levenshulme

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

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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.

Profit & Loss 01/04/2020 - 31/03/2021

INCOME AND SPENDING			
INCOME			
2020-21		2019-20	
Donations (mydonate)	2836	Awards for All	9980
Spotlight	5000	Donations (MyDonate/CAFdonate)	1410
Forever Manchester	3100	Donations (Urgent Need Fund)	4507
Aviva Community Fund	988	Spotlight Fund	5000
Comic Relief Paid Role	4000	Inspire donation	404
Barrow Cadbury Paid Role	5000	Lawfirm donation	250
ARM	3395		
Total	24319	Total	21551
SPENDING			
2020-21		2019-20	
busfares	0	busfares	6500
lunch	220	lunch	1959
gardening materials	776	gardening materials	1437
insurance	309	insurance	263
		kitchen equipment	399
infrastructure (clearing new plot, building maintenance)	2066	improvements to building	294
stationery	1044	stationery/admin	296
rent	171	rent	174
gifts for participants	423	presents for participants	387
external training	318	training/workshops	1697
		art materials	164
		trips	628
		Parties	233
		outreach events	330
volunteer travel expenses	344	volunteer expenses (travel, DBS)	719

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		2019-20
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', with a stylized, cursive script.

Jaqui Cotton (Chair)

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Tom Spencer', with a stylized, cursive script.

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	Unrestricted funds to nearest £
		-
		-
		-
		-
		-
		-
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 Name

<i>TSpencer</i>

Tom Spencer

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

8,813	4,947
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the period

Restricted funds	Endowment funds
to nearest £	to nearest £
4,317	-
-	-
-	-
4,317	-
OK	OK

Restricted funds	Endowment funds
to nearest £	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