

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.

Growing Together Levenshulme is collaboratively run by a team of volunteers. In November 2020, we recruited a freelancer to support the work of the volunteer team, and since August 2021 they have been employed by GTL, 3-days per week. Operational decisions are made by the Steering Group which comprises volunteers, staff and participants. Volunteers/staff 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. 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, to build 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.

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
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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)

Responsibilities and
basis of report

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

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: 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

UK

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.

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