

GROWING TOGETHER LEVENSHULME



Growing Together Levenshulme

Charity Number: 1166420

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

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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 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	10000
Awards for All	10000	Peter Kershaw Trust	2000
Souter CT	5000	Arnold Clark	1000
OCT Winter (unrestricted)	1500	Charity Service	3000
Grant: Society of the Holy Innocent Jesus	10000	Unicorn	1000
Grant: Ashworth CT	5005	Network for Social Change	7178
Grant (unrestricted): Volunteer wellbeing	1500	Volunteer Expenses Fund	920
Grant: Volunteer Expenses	800	GM Mental Wellbeing	2960
		Albert Hunt Trust	1000
		Oglesby Charitable	15000

		Trust	
		Autotrader	1000
		Survivors of Torture	3000
Total	50131	Total	55520
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	17692
Trips/events	1827		
Total	56046	Total	43403

	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 grey ink, appearing to read 'Jaqui Cotton', with a stylized, flowing script.

Jaqui Cotton (Chair), 5/11/2023

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

Tom Spencer (Treasurer), 5/11/2023



CHARITY COMMISSION
FOR ENGLAND AND WALES

Charity Name	No (if any)
Howling 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

		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	Details			
	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.