

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



**Growing Together Levenshulme**

## Contents

Legal and Administrative Details.....	2
Charity details.....	2
History, Structure and Governance.....	2
Risk management:.....	3
Public Benefit:.....	3
Mission Statement:.....	3
GTL Aims:.....	3
Values (as defined by participants):.....	3
The objects of GTL are:.....	3
April 2024 – March 2025: An overview of the past year.....	4
Our Garden.....	4
Providing Support.....	5
Our Community.....	6
Solidarity and Speaking Out.....	8
Financial Review.....	8
Profit & Loss 01/04/2024 - 31/03/2025.....	9
Statement of Assets and Liabilities at the Year End (31st March 2025).....	11
Notes to the financial statements:.....	11
Appendix A: Independent examiner's report on the accounts.....	12
Independent examiner's report on the accounts.....	13
Independent examiner's statement.....	13

## 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 31<sup>st</sup> 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 of 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
<b>Total</b>	<b>100323</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>78066</b>

--

<b>SPENDING</b>
-----------------

<b>2024-25</b>		<b>2023-24</b>	
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		
<b>Total</b>	<b>87851</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>71633</b>

<b>2024-25</b>		<b>2023-24</b>	
		<b>Surplus for the Year</b>	
<b>Surplus for the Year</b>	<b>12475</b>		<b>6432</b>

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

<b>Cash Funds</b>	<b>Amount</b>
Current account (including cash held in float)	33,919

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

<b>Liabilities</b>	<b>Amount due (optional)</b>
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

**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:** 15<sup>th</sup> 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