

# Free Books



# Hatfield

## **Trustees' Annual Report**

July 2024 – June 2025

Registered Charity No. 1167923

## Reference and administrative information

Charity name: Free Books Hatfield

Organisation type: Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO)

Registered: 29 June 2016

Address: Unit 52 The Galleria, Comet Way, Hatfield, Hertfordshire, AL10 0XX

Phone number: 07442707917

Email: [fbh2016@outlook.com](mailto:fbh2016@outlook.com)

Website: <https://sites.google.com/view/freebookshatfield>

## **Introduction**

Free Books Hatfield is an independent book rehoming charity run entirely by volunteers. Our aims are to prevent books from going to landfill and promote reading in the community. The public donates books to us, we sort and put them on our shelves, and then customers can come in and take up to 8 books for free per visit. We are open 11am - 4pm, Monday to Saturday, and have rehomed over 410,000 books since we first opened in 2016.

Our charity's purposes are set out in our constitution as:

1. The protection and preservation of the environment for the public benefit by recycling books and other literature within the local community.
2. To advance the education of the public by promoting reading in the local community.

## **Our Work and Achievements**

This past year saw a 7% increase in the number of books rehomed with respect to the previous one, with 69,481 books given out (an average of 5,790 per month), preventing them from going to landfill, promoting sustainability, and encouraging reading in the community. There was also a marked increase in the number of people who visited the bookshop, including along the year, and the trustees are optimistic about the future.

Our aim for the year was to continue to rehome books from our bookshop in The Galleria, offering them for free to anyone who visited us. The allowance was kept mostly at 8 books per person per visit throughout the year, thanks to generous donations of books and a careful management of stock levels.

Many teachers and self-educators have continued to rely on us to gain books for their classes and subjects, as well as students and their parents. In these cases, we allow them to take additional books (over our usual 8 book limit) for educational purposes, as we believe in the importance of books in learning. Families, groups with learning disabilities, carers, senior citizens, and many others also use our services, and we strive to ensure they leave our bookshop with some books to read. It is worthy of note that our bookshop is open to all, and we do not require visitors to register or become a member in order to take books for free.

In addition to giving out books at our bookshop, we also support local charities and organizations by supplying them with books, such as Isabel Hospice, so they can raise funds for their aims and goals. We also offer books to other shops in The Galleria for children's waiting areas and filming companies, who use them as props for tv shows and movies.

The main change for the charity in 2024/2025 was that the bookshop moved units within The Galleria, to a new shop with a greater floor area and storage space at the back. The move was completed in 11 days between Christmas and New Year, with volunteers and friends all coming along to help. Feedback was positive from both visitors and volunteers, and considerable time was dedicated afterwards to further improving the bookshop, with shelf edge labels, new bookshelves (donated by a local primary school), and general maintenance/repairs.

Most sections were expanded from their respective size in the previous shop, especially the Children's Corner, which had always been very popular and was often reaching capacity on the shelves. The new shop saw its size doubled, which proved to be a wise move as it continued to

be as popular as ever, especially during school holidays. The layout of the shop as a whole was planned on the basis of what stock we had and how fast we knew each of these would go, with allowance made for future changes and additions.

In April, a grand reopening ceremony was held, which was attended by the Mayor of Welwyn Hatfield, the Deputy Mayor of Hatfield, crime writer Mark Billingham, and representatives of local community groups, along with volunteers and trustees of Free Books Hatfield. This was also covered by the local newspaper.

Many new volunteers also joined the charity during this time, finding about the role through visiting the bookshop, the University of Hertfordshire (who's campus is a 10-minute walk away), and the local community, as well as from a new listing which was created on Hertfordshire's volunteering portal (GoVolHerts). This raised the prospect of opening on Sundays and/or expanding the opening hours, though as of the end of the period covered by this report, no decision had been made. However, thanks to all the new volunteers, it was possible to maintain the advertised opening times (Monday to Saturday 11am - 4pm) over 98% of the time.

We continue to have a very diverse volunteer team, from various backgrounds and nationalities, which is representative of the community we serve. In addition to this, not only have we provided volunteering opportunities, but we have helped people gain other opportunities by developing their customer service skills and giving them professional references, as well as supporting volunteers with various disabilities such as deafness, autism, and mobility issues.

In terms of the charity's online presence, a website was created in September 2025 to allow more people to find out about our work. Whilst the exact number of visitors to the website is not known, many people have told us in the bookshop that they found out about us through our website. The charity is also listed on the council's volunteering website, and maintains profiles on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter, which we use to promote reading and the services which we provide, for free, to the community.

Donations of books increased over the past year, which thanks to the extra storage space, could all be accepted. These came not only from individuals but also from schools and other organizations. Those from school libraries were especially welcome, as children's books are very popular, especially during school holidays, when we have rehomed over 1,800 books a week.

Towards the end of the period covered by this report, the trustees were looking into attending various events in the local community, one of which being the Summer Fair in Hatfield town centre organized by the Town Council, to give out free books and allow more people to find out about us and benefit from what we offer the community.

## **Financial Review**

Free Books Hatfield is funded entirely through monetary donations from our visitors. We do not have any other sources of revenue (either from grants, fundraisers, or sales). These donations cover the costs of our electricity and lighting, insurance, and repairs, among others. A breakdown of this is given in the Accounts adjoining this report.

Donations have remained stable throughout the year, though the trustees have considered various options should this witness a decrease in the future. The charity remains committed to

its aims of preventing books going to landfill and promoting in the community by giving books for free to anyone who visits us.

Total expenses were roughly the same as last year, though the cost of testing and repairs doubled, mostly as a result of works that were required in the new unit. The utility bills, whilst similar to last year's, are still pending the invoices for the second half of the year, which is estimated at £1,500. Going forward, LED lighting is due to replace the current fluorescent tubes, which date from the previous tenants, as these are more energy efficient.

The trustees will continue to act prudently to ensure the finances remain healthy.

## **Reserves Policy**

We currently operate under a rolling 6-month licence with Land Securities Limited, on a mutual benefit understanding, such that we continue to provide our service to the community and they allow us the use of one of their units within The Galleria.

Should Land Securities Limited start enforcing rent or ask us to leave The Galleria, Free Books Hatfield would be forced to find alternative premises, and in the interim place its existing stock in storage. It is estimated that funds in excess of £15,000 would be required for this process. This has been calculated on the basis of the volume of stock held (books, bookshelves, and other items), the price of said storage premises, the cost of transport (to the interim place and then to the new premises), and the cost of fitting and preparing a shop in a new premises. Consideration has been taken to the Charity Commission's document 'Charity reserves: building resilience' (CC19). The estimated funds have increased from last year due to a considerable increase in stock, inflation, and a reduction in storage and transport options.

It is also worthy of note that additional costs are anticipated as part of improving the shop fixtures and fittings in the new unit, which was empty for at least 3 years preceding our move into it. This includes new LED lighting (to replace the current fluorescent ones), painting, and potential new bookshelves.

## **Governance and Management**

Free Books Hatfield is a Charitable Incorporated Organisation and is run and managed in line with our Constitution. As of the year ending June 2025, the following people constituted the Board of Trustees.

Pedro Ubema Luengo (Chair) (appointed August 2024)

Joseph Azizollah (Treasurer) (appointed August 2024)

Alison Perry (appointed September 2021)

Chris Marven (appointed August 2024)

Nikoleta Mize (appointed November 2022)

In appointing new trustees, the current trustees will have regard to the skills, knowledge and experience needed for the effective administration of the CIO, and it is hoped to preserve some

continuity of experience when appointing new trustees to ensure the work done by the charity can continue for the foreseeable future.

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The undersigned hereby certify they have read and approved the Trustees' Annual Report and Accounts for the Year Ending June 2025.

*Pedro*

Pedro Ubada Luengo (Chair) – 27 April 2026

*Joseph*

Joseph Azizollah (Treasurer) – 27 April 2026



CHARITY COMMISSION  
FOR ENGLAND AND WALES

Charity Name  
Free Books Hatfield

No (if any)  
1167923

## Receipts and payments accounts

CC16a

For the period  
from

Period start date  
01-Jul-24

To

Period end date  
30-Jun-25

### 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 £
<b>A1 Receipts</b>					
Donations	3,735	-	-	3,735	3,698
Other	87	-	-	87	-
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Sub total (Gross income for AR)</b>	<b>3,822</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>3,822</b>	<b>3,698</b>
<b>A2 Asset and investment sales, (see table).</b>					
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Sub total</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>
<b>Total receipts</b>	<b>3,822</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>3,822</b>	<b>3,698</b>
<b>A3 Payments</b>					
Utilities (electricity)	150	-	-	150	1,918
Other premises expenses	627	-	-	627	666
Testing and Repairs	518	-	-	518	240
Insurance	473	-	-	473	480
Accountancy fee	360	-	-	360	360
Stationery	293	-	-	293	396
Volunteer expenses	267	-	-	267	704
Sundry (Other)	247	-	-	247	9
	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Sub total</b>	<b>2,935</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>2,935</b>	<b>4,773</b>
<b>A4 Asset and investment purchases. (see table)</b>					
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Sub total</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>
<b>Total payments</b>	<b>2,935</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>2,935</b>	<b>4,773</b>
<b>Net of receipts/(payments)</b>	<b>887</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>887</b>	<b>- 1,075</b>
<b>A5 Transfers between funds</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>
<b>A6 Cash funds last year end</b>	<b>23,802</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>23,802</b>	<b>24,878</b>
<b>Cash funds this year end</b>	<b>24,689</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>24,689</b>	<b>23,803</b>

## 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 £
<b>B1 Cash funds</b>	Current Account balance	24,689	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
	<b>Total cash funds</b>	24,689	-	-
	(agree balances with receipts and payments account(s))	OK	OK	OK
<b>B2 Other monetary assets</b>	Details			
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
<b>B3 Investment assets</b>	Details	Fund to which asset belongs	Cost (optional)	Current value (optional)
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
<b>B4 Assets retained for the charity's own use</b>	Details	Fund to which asset belongs	Cost (optional)	Current value (optional)
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
<b>B5 Liabilities</b>	Details	Fund to which liability relates	Amount due (optional)	When due (optional)
	Utility bills (which had not yet been sent to FBH as of June 2025)	Current Account	1,819	
			-	
			-	
			-	
Signed by one or two trustees on behalf of all the trustees	Signature	Print Name	Date of approval	
	<i>Pedro</i>	Pedro Ubada Luengo	27-Apr-26	
	<i>Joseph</i>	Joseph Azizollah	27-Apr-26	