



**Trustees' Annual Report
1 January to 31 December 2022**

Welcome Group Halesowen

Charity registration number: 1168507

Welcome Group Halesowen

Trustees' annual report for the year ended 31 December 2022

Charity registration number: 1168507

Registered address: Owen House, rear of Lifecentral Church
Little Cornbow
HALESOWEN
West Midlands
B63 3AJ

Email address: welcomegrouphalesowen@gmail.com

Website: www.welcomegrouphalesowen.org.uk

Trustees and officers

Trustee name	Office (if any)	Dates acted if not for whole year
Andrew Harwood	Chair (until 16.05.22) Project Manager	
Clare Neville	Secretary (until 16.05.22) Chair (from 16.05.22)	
Mike Gower	Vice Chair	
Dilys Ward	Secretary (from 16.05.22)	
Elizabeth Lacon	Treasurer	Until 31.10.22
Matthew Edwards		Until 16.05.22
Lynn Gower		
Moir McNulty		
Freda Parkes		
Helen Bryan		
Rachel Hall		Until 16.05.22
Anthony Lau		From 17.06.22

Structure, governance and management

Type of governing document: Constitution, adopted 12th May 2016

How the charity is constituted: Unincorporated association

Trustee selection methods: Trustees are appointed or reappointed annually at the Annual General Meeting held between March and May

Objectives and Activities

The objectives of the charity as set out in its constitution are:

- (1) The promotion of social inclusion for the public benefit among people who are refugees and asylum seekers and their dependents living with them, residing (temporarily or permanently) in Halesowen and the surrounding areas, who are socially excluded on

the grounds of their social and economic position, by providing social and recreational facilities and events involving the local community.

- (2) The relief of poverty, the promotion of physical and mental health and the advancement of education of asylum seekers and refugees and their dependents living with them in Halesowen and the surrounding areas through the provision of information, guidance and support.

The main activities in relation to those purposes for the public benefit:

The charity seeks to alleviate social isolation and financial exclusion of vulnerable asylum seekers and refugees, providing a safe weekly drop-in, telephone support and deliveries to people across Dudley, Sandwell and the west of Birmingham. Offering friendship, refreshments, empathy, mutual support, guidance, signposting, financial support, foodbank access, clothes, baby supplies and household goods. We have two drop-in sessions, on Monday morning 10.15 to 11.45am and Monday afternoon 12.30 to 2.00pm, during school term-time. Our sessions are completely free and we pay the bus fares of asylum seekers and those with refugee status to enable them to attend. We have toys and activities for pre-school children.

The trustees meet regularly throughout the year to plan and organise activities that ensure the charity complies with its stated purposes for the public benefit according to the Charity Commission's guidance.

Our vision:

Welcoming and helping asylum seekers and refugees

Our values

- Welcome all asylum seekers and refugees who come to us for help
- Embrace each person with respect and acceptance and without judgment
- Provide a place of safety and hope and facilitate mutual support
- Recognise that each individual has emotional, social, practical and spiritual needs

Achievements and Performance

Chair's Report for 2022

I think we can safely say Covid is behind us as far as our work at Welcome Group is concerned. But we discovered that some of the changes put in place to deal with it, enabled us to provide a better service so we have continued with them. Lifecentral Church enabling us to have the two rooms opened up into one space, and the two sessions, have halved the numbers in each session, and provide us with a much more pleasant and harmonious environment. We are very grateful for the support Lifecentral Church gives us.

Thinking about the world our members are living in, it is difficult to not feel despondent and depressed. We campaigned against the government's cruel Nationality and Borders Bill, which has now passed into law. With the proposal to send asylum seekers to Rwanda, though challenges to that are still ongoing through the courts, we can hope and pray that these challenges are successful.

The slow progress of the Home Office in processing asylum claims and the lack of suitable accommodation as the numbers build up, mean more people being housed in hotels. With payments not keeping pace with high levels of inflation, and the cost of living crisis, particularly the price of food, it is affecting our members very badly.

Sometimes the challenges can seem overwhelming, but we have to concentrate on the positive impact Welcome Group has on individual suffering people, and I share a comment made from an African man in March, *'When I come here, I feel free. I feel released. No harassment. I can relax. You are good people.'*

On a personal note, I have appreciated assisting Andrew (our project manager) in a small way with his role of registering new members of our group and responding to particular problems they are facing. It has been a privilege and very humbling to hear their specific problems especially if we have been able to offer assistance and support. Knowing we can make a difference is so important.

ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE YEAR

- This was a year of parties: to celebrate the late Queen's Platinum Jubilee, the Commonwealth Games and Christmas. At Christmas gifts were given to 194 children in 88 families, £5 notes in Christmas cards to 136 people and 75 supermarket gift cards to asylum seeker families and single people. 30 food hampers, from Lifecentral Church and Stourbridge Quakers, were also distributed. A particular delight of the coronation party was having 44 children of all ages who are usually at school or nursery when we meet.
- Supermarket gift cards, funded by SVP, were also given out during the summer (50 families) and at Easter (70 families and singles). In addition, SVP directly gave £2000 for home starter kits of smaller and larger appliances for settled people moving to permanent housing, not included in our finances as it was reimbursed directly from SVP. We are grateful to Mike for liaising on this.
- Afghan Welcome Celebration, hosted by Lifecentral Church on Saturday 7 May with Dudley Centre for Equality & Diversity (CfED). We welcomed 60 Afghan adults and children, plus special guests including the Mayor of Dudley. Featured a Kurdish feast, speeches, drumming, bouncy castle, henna painting and children's Eid gifts. Money from our Afghan Helping Hands Project was used to fund this. Our first direct involvement with the 16 Afghan families resettled in Dudley.
- 17 of our asylum seekers from 12 countries, with their families, have been granted refugee status (leave to remain). Apart from two people, they were waiting for between 5 and 21 years. These low figures speak volumes about the broken asylum system and enormous backlog of asylum claims.
- Performance of Journeymen Theatre's *The Bundle*, based on the story of a real Chechen asylum seeker woman and her children, in May. 20 volunteers and 10 refugees watched.
- We received a Dudley CVS Spotlight Award for our own ongoing work and partnership with Healthwatch Dudley.
- A new partnership with Brushstrokes Project whereby one of their immigration advisers, George, will run an immigration advice session once a month will begin in the New Year.
- A deepening partnership with Our Lady & St. Kenelm's Catholic Primary School including a performance of Christmas songs, different staff regularly helping on Monday afternoons, and gifts of toys and other items at Christmas.
- Our first ever website www.welcomegrouphalesowen.org.uk will be launched soon. We are particularly grateful to Anthony for his work on this. The website will help to

showcase our services, help our fundraising efforts and make information about the group more widely available.

STATISTICS

- In December 2022 we had 147 registered members and engaged with a total of 248 adult service users from 39 countries in 2022. Our members have 183 children in the UK. 60% are asylum seekers with the rest having refugee status. 10 of the asylum seekers had been refused with no recourse to public funds and were thus especially vulnerable.
- 68% of those we helped are Syrians, Eritreans, Afghans, Albanians, Nigerians, Iraqis, and El Salvadorians.
- Attendance at Monday sessions has consistently averaged 55-59 adults while the average number of mainly pre-school children has dropped from an average of 15 to only 10, reflecting increasing attendance at nurseries.
- Weekly referrals to foodbanks remain constant at an average of 5 each week.
- Newer asylum seekers are being housed in hotels. We have welcomed people from Britannia Hotels in Birmingham and Wolverhampton and more recently from The Collection Hotel on Hagley Road, Birmingham.

DEVELOPMENTS

- During the summer Healthwatch Dudley staff regularly attended Monday sessions to find out about the experience of our refugees in accessing health services, to then influence change in how services are delivered locally. They ran two community events with food, activities and health checks in August for Syrian families in Dudley.
- We have welcomed several new volunteers over the past year who have enthusiastically taken up their roles on Monday and behind the scenes. Kevin took over as treasurer in November from Elizabeth who stepped down as a trustee and treasurer after 14 years faithful service, since Welcome Group started.
- Our Afghan Helping Hands Project supported Afghans with English classes, household goods and children's coats in partnership with Dudley Centre for Equality and Diversity.
- We were approved to distribute 300 free Vodafone SIM cards with generous data, calls and texts. About half of these have already been passed on to about 70 newly arrived Ukrainians, our own members and several other groups working with refugees.
- The arrival of Ukrainians on the Homes for Ukraine scheme was potentially a new challenge for us, but their needs were very different and the government's provision more generous than for any other refugees so our contact with them has been minimal.

THANKS

As Chair of Welcome Group, I feel humbled that our small group here has enabled all this to happen. But I particularly want to thank Andrew, our project manager for his commitment, hard work and dedication to the service of asylum seekers and refugees. He enables the group to offer the support we do. We see what happens on Monday, the practical tasks he performs, the interviews with new members and those in difficulties, but we may not be so aware of what goes on beyond our Monday meetings. The organisational and administrative tasks, the telephone calls, the emails and letters written, the visits, the deliveries. Without him our members would not receive the service they do. We also thank OM for enabling him to fulfil this role.

But alongside him I want to thank our whole team of volunteers and trustees for their dedication and commitment, working together, using their variety of skills and talents to enable the work for asylum seekers and refugees to continue. We have around 40 people who volunteer in

various capacities and a smaller group, including the trustees, who are involved with deliveries, purchases, resolving our friends' practical problems, sorting and packing of donated goods, visiting and accompanying people to appointments.

Financial Review

Financial position at end of year

Cash in bank on 31/12/2022 was £15,000 in unrestricted funds. This is a healthy position to end the year on, but we are facing increasing demand on our services and the need to continually replenish our funds through funding applications to trusts and donations. Trustees have agreed a reserves policy of £3000 which is equivalent to 2 months operational costs. We have no liabilities, such as staff costs, to consider in reaching this figure.

Declaration

The trustees declare that they have approved the trustees' report above.

Signature: *C.E Neville*

Full name and position: Clare Neville
Chair

Date: 26th October 2023

WELCOME GROUP HALESOWEN

ACCOUNTS 1st JANUARY - 31st DECEMBER 2022

	2022	2021	
INCOME			
Donations:			
Halas PCC	5,727.00	3,036.00	
Legacy - Margot Fischl	0.00	5,000.00	
The Hope Centre	0.00	4,000.00	
Heart of England Community Fund	2,000.00	0.00	
Quakers - Stourbridge	600.00	500.00	
Donations in Memory of Anne West	0.00	765.00	
Donations	2,591.00	1,310.00	
+ PLT - Nappies & Baby Supplies	0.00	1,650.00	
Allan Lane Foundation	0.00	3,000.00	
Asda Foundation - Christmas 2021	0.00	300.00	
Asda Foundation - Christmas 2022	760.00	0.00	
Donations Christmas 2021	0.00	680.00	
Donations Christmas 2022	265.00	0.00	
HMRC Tax Refund	62.52	449.18	
National Lottery Fund	9,700.00	0.00	
Allchurches Trust	4,900.00	0.00	
Churches Together in Halesowen	830.00	0.00	
OLSK Catholic Church	261.69	0.00	
TOTAL INCOME	27,697.21	20,690.18	
EXPENDITURE			
Room Hire / Storage	1,130.00	400.00	
Insurance	464.80	464.80	
Bus Fares	6,395.55	3,857.00	
Refreshments	1,040.53	439.25	
Communications/Postage/Stationery	276.03	123.50	
Cleaning materials / hygiene / Safety	8.77	47.18	
Equipment	40.30	906.35	
Easter	136.20	178.20	
Christmas Expenses 2021	0.00	1,100.68	
Christmas Expenses 2022	1,948.64	0.00	
Volunteers Expenses & Training	143.92	170.38	
Afghan Helping Hands Project	4,397.85	0.00	
+ PLT Nappies & baby supplies	905.30	744.86	
HEF Baby Supplies & equipment	727.37	0.00	
Support - Baby Supplies & equipment	221.00	561.34	
Support - Mobile phones top up	80.00	6,195.00	
Support - inc. food & toiletries	276.02	734.20	
Support - household goods	719.31	616.13	
Support - finance	3,303.92	2,110.00	
Support - school uniforms	406.59	361.00	
Support Expenses - other items	46.50	1,405.22	
Support - Train / coach tickets / travel	183.30	0.00	
Childrens Resources	0.00	15.00	
Gifts	0.00	10.00	
Pat Inspection	35.00	66.00	
Fuel	50.25	0.00	
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	22,937.15	20,506.09	
SURPLUS	4,760.06	184.09	

WELCOME GROUP HALESOWEN

REGISTERED CHARITY NUMBER 1168507

ACCOUNTS

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST DECEMBER 2022

WELCOME GROUP HALESOWEN
REGISTERED CHARITY NO. 1168507

Independent Examiner's Report

I report on the attached accounts of Welcome Group Halesowen for the year ended 31st December 2022.

Respective responsibilities of trustees and examiner

As the charity's trustees you are responsible for the preparation of the accounts; you consider that an audit is not required for this year under section 144(2) of the Charities Act 2011 (the 2011 Act) and that an independent examination is needed.

It is my responsibility to:

- examine the accounts under section 145 of the 2011 Act;
- to follow the procedures laid down in the general Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the 2011 Act; and
- to state whether particular matters have come to my attention.

Basis of independent examiner's report

My examination was carried out in accordance with the general Directions given by the Charity Commission. An examination includes a review of the accounting records kept by the charity and a comparison of the accounts presented with those records. It also includes consideration of any unusual items or disclosures in the accounts and seeking explanations from you as trustees concerning any such matters. The procedures undertaken do not provide all the evidence that would be required in an audit and consequently no opinion is given as to whether the accounts present a 'true and fair view' and the report is limited to those matters set out in the statement below.

Independent examiner's statement

In connection with my examination, no matter has come to my attention:

1. Which gives me reasonable cause to believe that in any material respect the requirements

- to keep accounting records in accordance with section 130 of the 2011 Act; and
- to prepare accounts which accord with the accounting records and comply with the accounting requirements of the 2011 Act

have not been met; or

2. To which, in my opinion, attention should be drawn in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.



G. M. JONES
ACCOUNTANT
DUDLEY CVS
7 ALBION STREET
BRIERLEY HILL
DY5 3EE
1st September 2023

WELCOME GROUP HALESOWEN
REGISTERED CHARITY NO. 1168507
INCOME & EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT
YEAR ENDED 31ST DECEMBER 2022

	2022		2021	
	£	£	£	£
INCOME				
National Lottery Community Fund	9,700		-	
Halas PCC	5,727		3,036	
Legacy	-		5,000	
Allchurches Trust	4,900		-	
Hope Centre	-		4,000	
Allan Lane Foundation	-		3,000	
Heart of England Community Fund	2,000		-	
Postcode Lottery Trust	-		1,650	
Other Grants/Donations	5,308		3,555	
Gift Aid	62		449	
	<u>27,697</u>		<u>20,690</u>	
EXPENDITURE				
Direct Charitable Expenditure	20,838		18,329	
Rent and Insurance	1,595		865	
Printing, Stationery, Advertising	276		123	
Volunteers' Training/Expenses	144		170	
Repairs and Renewals	75		972	
Sundries	9		47	
	<u>22,937</u>		<u>20,506</u>	
<u>SURPLUS FOR THE YEAR</u>	<u>4,760</u>		<u>184</u>	

WELCOME GROUP HALESOWEN
REGISTERED CHARITY NO. 1168507
STATEMENT OF ASSETS AND LIABILITIES
AS AT 31ST DECEMBER 2022

	2022	2021
CURRENT ASSETS		
Bank Current Account	16,900	12,409
Petty Cash	681	412
NET ASSETS	17,581	12,821
Represented by:		
Income & Expenditure Account:		
Balance at 31 st December 2021	12,821	12,637
Surplus for the Year	4,760	184
	17,581	12,821

Funds above include £1,775 remaining from grants received which has been defrayed after the year end.

Approved by the Committee on 1st September 2023 and signed on their behalf.

C. Neill

CHAIR

K. Sables

TREASURER