

CHARITY REGISTRATION NUMBER 1170215



CITIES FOR CHILDREN
ANNUAL REPORT AND FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
FOR THE YEAR ENDING 30 MAY 2025

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FOR THE YEAR ENDING 30 MAY 2025**

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Legal And Administrative Information

Registered Charity Name: Cities for Children

Charity Registration Number: 1170215

Registered address: 13 Wynnstay Gardens
London
W8 6UP

Trustees:

- **Jetske van Dijk** - Chair (appointed 21 January 2023)
- **Usman Qureshi** - Treasurer (appointed 30 November 2024)
- **Nabeela Ijaz Khan** - (appointed for a three-year term on 21 January 2023)
- **David Walker** - (term renewed for three years on 13 February 2024)
- **Ali Nabi Nur** - (appointed 16 March 2023)
- **Sehar Tariq** - (appointed for a three-year term on 21 January 2024)

Bankers: Barclays Bank UK PLC

CITIES FOR CHILDREN (Reg. 1170215)
Report of the Trustees for the year ended 30 May 2025

The Trustees present their annual report and accounts for the year ended 30 May 2025. The accounts have been prepared in accordance with the receipts and payments basis in accordance with the Charity Commission guidance

Structure, governance and management

The charity is a CIO Foundation and governed by a constitution dated 02 July 2016. The charity registered with the Charities Commission on 16 November 2016 (Charity reg no 1170215).

Trustees are responsible for setting strategies and policies and for ensuring these are implemented.

Risk management

The charity's trustees have considered the major risks to which the charity is exposed and have reviewed potential risks. Systems and procedures have been put in place to manage the risks and to mitigate any adverse outcomes, and a risk register is being updated. A Child Safeguarding Policy is in place and has been adapted for work in both Pakistan and the UK.

Objectives and activities

Drawing from the principles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, Cities for Children seeks to protect what we frame as the “right to a childhood” – the right to read, the right to play and the right to feel safe - for children facing the challenges of urban poverty. These include children from refugee and migrant backgrounds who experience risks of neglect, abuse, exploitation and exclusion from basic services like education.

Our model is based on partnering with small, under-resourced organisations giving crucial education or protection services to under-served children. We have been set up to improve the quality of what our partners offer through three interwoven strands of work, creating holistic programmes for child development and wellbeing:

- The Right to Read: non-formal education programming supporting literacy, numeracy and socioemotional learning particularly in early childhood.
- The Right to Play: structured recreation programmes, carefully designed to build socio-emotional skills and motivate children to continue learning.
- The Right to Feel Safe: resources and training to build adults’ capacity to create safe and nurturing learning spaces, free from violence and corporal punishment.

Achievements and Performance

During this financial year, our work was also recognised internationally: *Partners in Learning* was **selected for the HundrED Global Collection 2025** of the most impactful and scalable education innovations in the world, launched at a ceremony in Helsinki.

Our sister entity in Pakistan (**Chotay Shehri Education Foundation**) grew more independent, securing a **renewal of a grant from the Malala Fund**. This was a year of outreach within the UK, particularly in terms of providing services to **refugee and asylum-seeking children**. We were able to identify a niche in which we could add value to existing service provision, particularly in the realm of **supporting positive mental health and easing transitions for children**

A major breakthrough this year was our expansion of **Playful Learning for Refugees in transitional housing in West Sussex**. Following a short pilot, we were commissioned by the West Sussex Council to design and deliver sessions to ease the transition for newly arrived refugee children. Across 3 iterations, we delivered **52 sessions** across one and later two hotels, reaching approximately **450 children**. Many of these children were Afghan nationals arriving via third countries, living in hotels for 6-18 months with limited access to schooling. Our sessions offered **structured, creative learning opportunities**, supporting English language development, socioemotional learning (SEL), wellbeing, and positive peer interactions. Feedback from children, families, and hotel staff highlighted increased **joy, motivation, and confidence**.

Highlights

- Delivered three iterations of Playful Learning, expanding to two hotels in West Sussex for newly arrived refugee children
- Grew the UK team with the addition of a Development Officer and three new volunteers, enabling delivery at multiple sites and enhancing programme support.
- Raised £27,000 in grant funding and over £12,000 in commissioning income to support programme growth
- Selected for the HundrED Global Collection 2025, recognising *Partners in Learning* as a leading educational innovation
- Continued advocacy to end corporal punishment through a partnership with the National Commission on the Rights of the Child, Pakistan

Detail:

a) Playful Learning for Newly Arrived Refugees



One major highlight this year was the expansion of our **Playful Learning** programme in West Sussex, delivering three iterations of sessions across two hotels for newly arrived Afghan refugee children. Many of these children had been in transitional accommodation for **six months or longer**, often due to specialised housing needs or large families, and very few had access to formal schooling, during our time there.

The programme required careful planning to accommodate the uncertainty of resettlement, with children moving at short notice and group composition changing weekly. Our sessions focused on developing **spoken English and key vocabulary**, while supporting **mental wellbeing, creative expression, and peer interaction**. They provided structure and something to look forward to during a period of transition, helping children feel welcomed and engaged as they adapted to their new lives.

While attendance varied per session, we recorded reaching over 450 individual children, starting with one hotel and expanding to two by March 2025.

Programme Goals

- Build **English vocabulary** and **school readiness** for newly arrived children in transitional housing.
- Support **emotional wellbeing** through joy, belonging, and creative expression.
- Develop **SEL skills**: recognising emotions, communication, problem-solving, and confidence.

Highlights & Impact

- Children reported increased **joy, confidence, and engagement**, sharing statements such as *"I became clever"* and *"I am happy in this class."*
- Families observed **new routines and motivation** in daily life.
- Hotel staff noted a **"transformation in daily life"** for children.
- **Case Study - Ahmed (Age 9, Kandahar)**: Arrived withdrawn and speaking only Pashto; over seven weeks, he became communicative, proudly created a puppet project, and shared aspirations to become an astronaut. His father said: *"He really looks forward to Thursdays now. He is very happy in your sessions."*

b) Programming in Pakistan

A total of £14,000/- GBP from Ave Fenix Albion fund was transferred to our sister entity to support early childhood programming in Pakistan.

“Dhanak Dheri”

Dhanak Dheri (“The Rainbow in Dheri”) was an Early Childhood Education (ECE) space we set up in the neighbourhood of Dheri Hassanabad, Rawalpindi, in collaboration with **Junior Jinnah Trust (JJT)**. This was in the aftermath of a Partners in Learning programme conducted in the neighbourhood with children at risk of being out of school, in which the preschool-aged “Little Partners” expressed their desire to go to school “every day.”

For those Little Partner alumni and others in their community too young to enrol in formal schools, Dhanak was established as an eight-month playful learning space in the absence of other early learning opportunities. Designed as a **model centre**, the centre provided children from underserved communities with foundational literacy, numeracy, and socioemotional skills to ensure smoother transitions into primary school. Elements of holistic support included biweekly meals; weekly playful learning sessions facilitated by our Programme Officer; Montessori learning materials and constant pedagogical support from our partners.

The **Dhanak Dheri programme** successfully demonstrated how **playful, community-based, and inclusive ECE models** can bridge critical gaps in early childhood education.

Outcomes and Impact

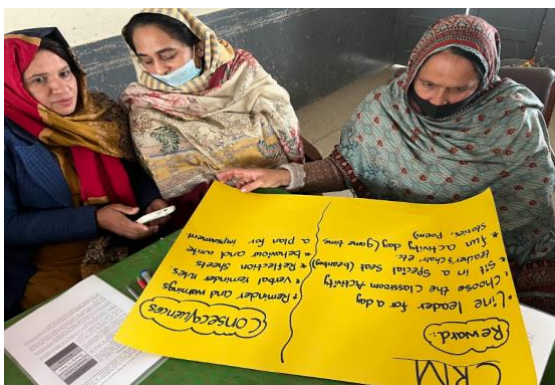
Progress was measured via a baseline and endline assessment, through which the younger cohort (age 3-4) showed substantial progress in both academic and socioemotional development and older learners (4.5-6) demonstrated strong readiness for primary school:

Following the “graduation” ceremony, alongside our partners we supported 44 out of 50 children to transition to neighbourhood schools. The younger cohort of 19 children was accommodated in the JJT school itself, and through AVF we supported their educational costs until they entered Grade 1. Both cohorts entered school with stronger foundational skills and further developed confidence, motivation, and fine motor abilities required for formal schooling.





c) Advocacy and Thought Leadership



We continued to build Cities for Children's niche as an organisation committed to creating safe, nurturing and playful spaces that not just enhance learning but also wellbeing and resilience for vulnerable children.

Building on our ongoing advocacy to end corporal punishment in learning spaces, our "Maar

Nahi Pyaar” campaign continued to gain momentum this year. Around the world, countries are grappling with the challenge of ending corporal punishment in schools and homes, and Pakistan is no exception. Despite progressive legislation, harmful disciplinary practices remain widespread. At Cities for Children, we remain committed to building safer, more nurturing learning environments and contributing to the global movement to end violence against children.

Through **media, advocacy, research, and international platforms**, we worked to ensure that Pakistan’s experiences and lessons inform and benefit from global conversations on child rights and non-violent discipline.

Our **media engagements** brought national attention to the issue. Founder **Madeeha Ansari** appeared on *Zara Hat Kay* and participated in a podcast with the **Aga Khan University Institute for Educational Development**, sharing perspectives on building nurturing, non-violent classrooms. Additionally, a **Maar Nahi Pyaar livestream** with Programme Officer **Syeda Ansa** helped further amplify the campaign’s reach.

We maintained strong **partnerships with the National Commission on the Rights of the Child (NCRC)**, exploring joint advocacy efforts and co-branded awareness posts. Our participation in the launch of NCRC’s *State of Children* report further reinforced our shared commitment to child rights and safeguarding.

We consolidated our project learnings and field experience into a research paper that was accepted for presentation at the **UKFIET Conference** in Oxford in September 2025. We also delivered a presentation titled “*Ending Corporal Punishment in Schools in Pakistan*” at a **Keeping Children Safe (KCS)** members-only webinar, engaging child protection professionals from Syria, Jordan, and Lebanon.

Finally, we submitted a **Maar Nahi Pyaar** animation and abstract to the **Aga Khan University’s 13th International Conference**, which was accepted for video presentation, marking another milestone in amplifying Pakistan’s leadership in the global dialogue on ending violence against children.

In line with our commitment to child rights beyond the UK, we **collaborated with the creative learning organisation Seenaryo** to raise funds for **children in Gaza**, reflecting our belief in the shared responsibility to protect childhood everywhere. Additionally, we supported **community engagement initiatives**, including two Iftar events, one hosted at the Pakistan High Commission further deepening our relationships and raising awareness of our work with diaspora networks.

Publications

Title and theme	Publication/Authors	Link
A Gentler World	Madeeha Ansari for Dawn News paper a public call for compassionate approaches	https://www.dawn.com/news/1907675

	to discipline.	
Seekho Sikhao Stories: Making Heroes with Heart	Organisational	https://www.citiesforchildren.co/seekho-sikhao-stories-making-heroes-with-heart/
The Power of Connection – SEL as a Journey	Organisational	https://www.citiesforchildren.co/the-power-of-connection-sel-as-a-journey/
Policy brief on free and compulsory education	National Commission on the Rights of Child	https://ncrc.gov.pk/wp-content/uploads/2025/08/POLICY-Brief-on-Free-and-Compulsory-Education.pdf

Key Fundraising and Income Sources:

- National Lottery Fund (£10,000)
- Treebeard Trust (£10,000)
- Garfield Weston Trust (£5000)
- GilChrist Trust (£2000 raised)
- West Sussex Commission (£12,561 invoice raised, payment in next financial year)
- Iftar at Pakistan High Commission (£4,240 raised in aftermath)
- Iftar with Sisters Ventures Club
- Ramadan speaking event at Third Eye Consulting

Public Benefit Statement

The section of this report below entitled 'Objectives and activities' sets out the objects and aims of the charity. The trustees have considered this, in conjunction with the guidance contained in the Charity Commission's general guidance on public benefit, and have concluded that:

- 1) the aims of the charity continue to be charitable;
- 2) the work done by the charity gives identifiable benefits to the charitable sector and both directly and
- 3) indirectly to individuals in need;
- 4) the benefits are for the public; not unreasonably restricted in any way;
- 5) there is no detriment or harm arising from the aims or activities.

Volunteers

We had one part-time Programme Officer, Fran Sharman and one part-time Development Officer, Maaha Suleiman during this time. We also built a partnership with the University of Sussex and had the support of a cohort of volunteers at the Masters Level including Irem Akbas, Wasfiya Sheikh and Wanda Eileen Achieng.

Financial review

During the period, the Charity received total income of £56.9k (2024: £20.1k). The charity incurred expenditure of £34.7k (2024: £30k). The carried forward cash fund balance is £60k (2024: £37.8k).

Reserves Policy

The trustees believe that the fund-raising plans in place are sufficiently robust to cover the next 12 months costs.

Trustees' responsibilities statement

The trustees are responsible for preparing the trustees' report and the financial statements in accordance with the United Kingdom Accounting Standards (United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice) and applicable law and regulations.

The law applicable to charities requires the trustees to prepare financial statements for each financial year which give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the charity and of the incoming resources and application of resources of the charity for that period. In preparing these financial statements, the trustees are required to:

- select suitable accounting policies and then apply them consistently;
- observe the methods and principles in the Charities SORP;
- make judgements and estimates that are reasonable and prudent;
- state whether applicable accounting standards have been followed, subject to any material departures disclosed and explained in the financial statements; and
- prepare the financial statements on the going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the charity will continue in business.

The trustees are responsible for keeping proper accounting records that disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the charity and enable them to ensure that the financial statements comply with the Charities Act 2011, the applicable Charities (Accounts and Reports) Regulations, and the provisions of the constitution. The trustees are also responsible for safeguarding the assets of the charity and hence for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

This report was approved by the trustees on ...31 January 2026... And signed on their behalf by:



.....

Jetske van Dijk
Chair

CITIES FOR CHILDREN
Independent Examiner's Report to the trustees of CITIES FOR CHILDREN

I report to the charity trustees on my examination of the accounts of the charity for the year ended 30 May 2025 which are set out on page 11 to 13.

Respective responsibilities of trustees and examiner

As the charity's trustees of CITIES FOR CHILDREN 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 CITIES FOR CHILDREN 's accounts carried out under section 145 of the 2011 Act and in carrying out my examination I have followed all 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 giving me cause to believe that in any material respect:

1. accounting records were not kept in respect of CITIES FOR CHILDREN as required by section 130 of the Act; or
2. the accounts do not accord with those records; or
3. the accounts do not comply with the accounting requirements concerning the form and content of accounts set out in the Charities (Accounts and Reports) Regulations 2008 other than any requirement that the accounts give a 'true and fair view' which is not a matter considered as part of an independent examination.

I have no concerns and have come across no other matters in connection with the examination to which attention should be drawn in this report in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

Ali Arshad

Ali Arshad
(ACCA)

ACCOUNTAX ZONE LTD
20-22 Wenlock Road, London
N1 7GU

Cities for Children (Reg.1170215)
Receipts and Payments Accounts
As at 30 May 2025

	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	Total 2025 £	Total 2024 £
Receipts				
Donations	1,662	1,959	3,621	17,087
In-Kind donation	-	-	-	-
Grant	27,000	14,000	41,000	-
Gift Aid	3,510	-	3,510	-
Other Income	81	-	81	-
Zakat	1,456	7,276	8,732	3,073
Sub Total	33,709	23,234	56,943	20,160
Assets and Investment sales	-	-	-	-
Total Receipts	33,709	23,234	56,943	20,160
Payments				
Fund raising /Events	3,350	-	-	636
Project cost	11,374	17,900	29,274	27,340
Support cost	1,123	16	1,139	1,973
Governance Cost	994	-	994	60
In-kind Spent				
Evaluation Framework	-	-	-	-
Sub-total	16,840	17,917	34,756	30,009
Assets and Investment Purchases	-	-	-	-
Total Payments	16,840	17,917	34,756	30,009
Net of receipts / Payments	16,869	5,318	22,187	- 9,849
Transfer between funds				
Cash funds last year end	36,921	927	37,848	47,697
Cash funds last year end	53,790	6,245	60,034	37,848

Cities for Children (Reg.1170215)
Statement of Assets and Liabilities
As at 30 May 2025

	Unrestricted Funds £	Total 2025 £	Total 2024 £
Cash Funds			
Cash at Bank	60,034	60,034	37,848
Total Cash Funds	60,034	60,034	37,848
Assets Retained for the Charity own use			
Freehold Land & Building	-	-	-
Total	-	-	-
Liabilities	420	420	420

Approved by the Board on ...31 January 2026... And signed on its behalf by:



.....

Jetske van Dijk
Chair

Notes forming part of the financial statements for the year ended 30 May 2025

1. Accounting policies

(a) Basis of preparation

The accounts have been prepared in accordance with the receipts and payments basis in accordance with the Charity Commission guidance.

(b) Charity status

Cities for Children is a CIO foundation and is registered with the Charity Commission under the reference of 1170215.

(c) Fund accounting

General funds are unrestricted funds which are available for use at the discretion of the trustees in furtherance of the general objectives of the charity and which have not been designated for other purposes.

Restricted funds are funds which are to be used in accordance with specific restrictions imposed by donors or which have been raised by the charity for particular purposes. The cost of raising and administering such funds are charged against the specific fund. The aim and use of each restricted fund is set out in the notes to the financial statements.

(d) Receipts

All incoming resources are included in the Receipt & payment Accounts when the charity actually receives legally entitled income.

(e) Payments

All expenditure is accounted for on payments basis and has been classified under headings that aggregate all costs related to the category. Where costs cannot be directly attributed to particular headings they have been allocated to activities on a basis consistent with use of the resources.